Professional sports team fan and media relations: a public relations case study of the 2003-04 Philadelphia Flyers professional hockey team

Joseph Mathew Harasta Jr.
Rowan University

Recommended Citation
https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/1158

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Rowan Digital Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Rowan Digital Works. For more information, please contact LibraryTheses@rowan.edu.
PROFESSIONAL SPORTS TEAM FAN AND MEDIA RELATIONS:
A PUBLIC RELATIONS CASE STUDY OF THE 2003-04 PHILADELPHIA
FLYERS PROFESSIONAL HOCKEY TEAM

by
Joseph Mathew Harasta Jr.

A Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Arts Degree
of The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
June 1, 2004

Approved by

Date Approved 6-18-04

© 2004 Joseph M Harasta Jr.
ABSTRACT

Joseph M. Harasta Jr.
Professional Sports Team Fan and Media Relations: A Public Relations Case Study of the 2003-04 Philadelphia Flyers Professional Hockey Team
2004
Advisor: Professor Anthony Fulginiti
Public Relations Graduate Program

The relationships between a professional sports team, its fans and media determine the fiduciary success of the team. The responsibility of developing and fostering this relationship falls to the team’s public relations department.

The purpose of this study was to (a) determine the influence team performance has on the relationships between a sports team, its fans and media and (b) find ways to improve these vital relationships. In doing so, sports team’s public relations practitioners might better understand the relationships between their team and its key publics while maintaining these relationships during both winning and losing seasons.

To examine the relationships between a professional sports team, its fans and media, this researcher studied the Philadelphia Flyer’s performance, its fans and media coverage throughout the 2003-04 regular hockey season. This researcher conducted intercept studies of 100 Flyers fans to understand their wants and needs after both winning and losing games, interviewed sports journalists to find ways to improve media relations and performed content analyses of Flyers media coverage to compare the quantity and quality of media coverage.

Findings indicate that team performance does not affect fan allegiance even though media coverage decreases as team performance suffers.
MINI-ABSTRACT

Joseph M. Harasta Jr.
Professional Sports Team Fan and Media Relations: A Public Relations Case Study of the
2003-04 Philadelphia Flyers Professional Hockey Team
2004
Advisor: Professor Anthony Fulginiti
Public Relations Graduate Program

This study looks at the relationship between team performance, fan attitude and media
coverage. To examine this relationship, the researcher studied the 2003-04 Philadelphia
Flyers professional hockey team. The findings show that team performance does not
affect fan allegiance. However, both the quantity and quality of media coverage
decreases as team performance suffers. Accordingly, if employed, sports team public
relations practitioners might positively affect fan attitude and improve media coverage in
the face of poor team performance.
“All elements of our society need a professional societal technician to aid in adjusting them to their publics. This cannot be done by emphasis on words themselves, if it is to have lasting effect. It demands action, action based on social responsibility that will bring about adjustment between publics and the party concerned. The action must be based on applied social science, applying to the problem at hand what social scientists have learned about group and group behavior.”—Edward Bernays

“Philadelphia is the only place where you pull up on the bus and you’ve got the grandfather, grandmother, the grandkids, the kids, everybody flicking you off. The other stadiums, they kind of wave at you and give you the thumbs-down. Here, they give you the middle finger.”—Michael Strahan (NY Giants Defensive End)
Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction........................................................................................................ 1

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature..................................................................................... 19

Fan Psychology.................................................................................................................... 19
  Identity Theory.................................................................................................................. 19
  Social Identity Theory....................................................................................................... 20
  Fan vs. Spectator.............................................................................................................. 24
  Psychological Effects of Being a Fan................................................................................ 25
  Psychological Factors Affecting Fan Satisfaction............................................................ 27

Fan Behavior....................................................................................................................... 30
  Fan Violence...................................................................................................................... 31
  Sports Fans as Consumers............................................................................................... 34

Factors Affecting Fan Relations......................................................................................... 38
  Economic Factors Affecting Fan Relations..................................................................... 39
  Effects of Athletes on Fan Relations............................................................................... 43
  Hockey Fans and Fighting............................................................................................... 47
  Fan Relations Efforts........................................................................................................ 49
  Team Management Factors Affecting Fan Relations....................................................... 50
  Media Factors Affecting Fan Relations............................................................................ 54

Philadelphia Sports Fans.................................................................................................... 57
  Player Perspective on Philadelphia Fans........................................................................ 57
  The Fans Themselves....................................................................................................... 58

Chapter 3: Research Design............................................................................................... 63

Chapter 4: Results.............................................................................................................. 68

Fan Intercept Studies......................................................................................................... 71
  Data Set I (Wins & Losses)............................................................................................. 71
  Data Set II (Wins Only).................................................................................................. 81
  Data Set III (Losses Only)............................................................................................. 88
  Data Set IV (Diehard Fans)........................................................................................... 96
  Data Set V (Average Fans)............................................................................................. 107
  Data Set VI (Casual Fans)............................................................................................. 115
  Data Set VII (Cross Comparisons)................................................................................ 122
Content Analysis ........................................................................................................... 134
Data Set VIII (Philadelphia Daily News Articles) .......................................................... 134
  Winning Game Totals ................................................................................................. 138
  Losing Game Totals .................................................................................................. 139
  Tie Game Totals ........................................................................................................ 140
Data Set IX (Philadelphia Daily News Articles Breakdown of Data by Month) .......... 141
  October ...................................................................................................................... 141
  November ................................................................................................................ 142
  December ................................................................................................................. 143
  January ..................................................................................................................... 144
  February .................................................................................................................. 145
  March ......................................................................................................................... 146
  April ......................................................................................................................... 147
Data Set X (610-WIP Radio Recordings) .................................................................... 148
Data Set XI (610-WIP - Wins Only) ............................................................................ 150
Data Set XII (610-WIP - Losses Only) ........................................................................ 153
Data Set XIII (610-WIP - Ties Only) .......................................................................... 155
Data Set XIV (610-WIP - Cross Comparisons) ............................................................. 156

Interview with Philadelphia sports journalist ................................................................ 158
Data Set XV (Transcript of Interview with Philadelphia Daily News’s Ed Moran) ...... 158

Interview with Philadelphia Flyers Public Relations Personnel .................................. 160
Data Set XVI (Transcript of Interview with Communications Director Zack Hill) ...... 160

Chapter 5: Discussion .................................................................................................. 166

Bibliography ................................................................................................................ 175

Figure 1 (Fan Intercept Survey) .................................................................................. 186
Figure 2 (In-depth Interview Questions for Philadelphia Flyers PR Personnel) .......... 189
Figure 3 (In-depth Interview Questions for Philadelphia Sports Journalist) .............. 191
Chapter 1

Introduction

Organizational public relations seeks to foster positive relationships between the organization and its publics. An organization relies on the effective, professional management of communication to foster goodwill between itself and its consumers. This communication builds long-term, successful relations between the organization and its consumers. In professional sports, a sports team’s public relations and fan relations department has the responsibility for developing and maintaining positive relations with their most important consumers—their fans. However, unlike most consumer-driven industries in which an organization can change its products easily to meet consumer wants, the sports industry’s product, the team itself, is more difficult to change.

The number of variables that can plague a sports team makes the job of a professional sports team’s public relations practitioner more difficult compared to other businesses. Unexpected and oftentimes unmanageable problems like player injury, poor officiating and overall disinterest in the sport, force practitioners to maintain consistently positive relations with fans in a very inconsistent industry-an industry that many in the business of professional sports say is currently going through its worst financial crises in decades.

In 2001, the National Hockey League’s (NHL) All-Star Game attracted its lowest audience rating in the game’s history. That same year, college football’s unofficial title game, The Rose Bowl, attracted its worst ratings because the Bowl Championship series began. Dean Witter predicted that three out of the four major U.S. television networks
would lose a combined $4 billion on their sports-rights contracts in the next five years.\textsuperscript{1} Tim Lieweke, president of Anshultz Entertainment Group, which owns 10 Major League Soccer teams and the NHL’s Los Angles Kings said, “I think in the next five years you’re going to see team bankruptcies…arenas will close…and you’re going to see a league or two that’s going to Armageddon.”\textsuperscript{2}

The responsibilities of public relations practitioners become even more important in an industry that appears heading for hard times in the next few years. The primary function of sports relations, the maintenance of relationships between a team and its fans, is now more critical than ever in helping to ensure the survival of a sports organization. However, promoting enthusiasm in professional sports organizations can often be difficult for public relations practitioners, especially when their teams perform poorly.

In his 1995 research study on fan opinion, Robert Madrigal says that fan attitude toward a team depends on a fan’s dispositions toward the team and its players.\textsuperscript{3} Madrigal says this disposition is also crucial in determining continued fan interest in the team and its players. Researcher R. L. Oliver added that individuals, in this case, fans, who are satisfied with their consumption experience, i.e. the team and its players, will repeatedly “repatronage” the organization, or attend games, purchase team-related items, etc.\textsuperscript{4} Therefore, it seems that sports fans’ attitudes are dictated by the level of satisfaction they derive from their favorite team, and in the professional sports industry, team performance most influences fan satisfaction.

\textsuperscript{1} Eric Fisher, “Fans Stay Home, Switch Channels: America’s Sports Industry is in a Funk,” \textit{Insight on the News} 15 July 2002: 28
\textsuperscript{2} Eric Fisher, 28
In 2002, after their appearance in the NBA finals, the Philadelphia 76ers sold out 25 games while playing to a 98 percent capacity throughout the season. During their 1972-73 season, the 76ers’ game attendance averaged just 5,901 per home game. The team’s record was a dismal 9-73 that year. As a sports relations practitioner, creating and maintaining positive fan relations can be a challenge in such an environment. As team performance decreases, fan attitudes decrease and poor fan attitude that can force professional sports organizations into financial crisis. However, regardless of team performance, sports relations practitioners must ensure that the relationships between fans and their team remain as strong and perhaps even stronger when the team’s performance declines, as it is when the team is successful.

Problem

If professional sports teams’ public relations practitioners hope to successfully gauge the effectiveness of sports relations on fan attitude, they must first understand the mentality of fans themselves. Acquiring fans’ perspectives toward their teams and learning what fans want during losing seasons may help sports public relations practitioners combat the disinterest and anger felt by fans when their teams perform poorly.

Christian M. End, a psychologist and head of the University of Missouri-Rolla’s Sports Fan Research Group, says that fanatical attitudes are so deep-seated in the collective mindsets of all fans that they are no longer aware they even share these same

---

feelings with other fans. End claims that fans are unaware that they feel the same way about their team as their fellow fans. If all fans share the same feelings about a team, then a sports public relations practitioner can efficiently meet the needs of fans with just a few changes to the team’s PR activities, rather than trying to address the needs of each fan.

Often, when confronted with a loss or poor play, fans will disassociate themselves from the same teams they were cheering only minutes earlier. When commenting about the loss of their favorite team, most fans will use third-person pronouns to remove themselves from their team, its players and their performance: “they’re terrible, they’ll never win.” Conversely, when describing a victory by their favorite team, many fans will use first-person pronouns to associate themselves with the team and its victory: “we’re number one, we are the champions.” Robert B. Cialdini, Regent’s professor of psychology at Arizona State University, originated the terms “BIRGing” and “CORFing” to describe the collective psychology all sports fans seem to share.

“BIRGing,” or Basking In Reflected Glory, describes fans’ desire to increase their self-esteem by associating themselves with their team when it succeeds. “CORFing,” or Cutting Off Reflected Failure, describes fans’ desire to disassociate themselves from their team when it fails. End adds that these feelings are so deeply ingrained that fans are unaware of the actual performance of the team because they are only concerned with the

---

game’s outcome. He says, “What’s amazing is how unconscious fans are of the facts [of a game]. That shows how ingrained society’s notion is to disassociate from losers.”

Team performance thwarts public relations efforts to build and maintain long-lasting positive relations. However, by recognizing and catering to fans needs when teams both win and lose, public relations may be able to better affect fan attitude during winning seasons and win their support during losing seasons.

In a 2002 *USA Today* article, guest writer, Bob Katz wrote, “It is no secret that sports fans are the single most abused consumer group in North America...unbowed by feelings of inadequacy; yet being a fan has become essentially a primer in impotence.” When public relations can identify with fans, they may be better able to lessen the resentments and animosities felt by sports fans, especially when the team loses.

If sports relations practitioners can feel fans’ frustration in watching their favorite team lose, anger from paying high stadium prices and resentment in seeing multi-million-dollar athlete’s complain they are not paid enough, then practitioners can effectively meet fans’ needs. Sports relations practitioners must understand how fans feel. When they do, they will be able to give the fans what they want because they will have essentially become fans themselves.

This study will identify the needs and feelings of sports fans and gain an understanding of their relationships with their favorite teams. In addition, the study will identify what teams can provide their fans during marginal seasons-seasons in which teams neither finish in last place nor make the playoffs. Although the findings come from one professional hockey team during a single season, the data may be useful in

---

9 Bob Katz “Say it, Sports Fans: We’re not Going to Take it Anymore,” *USA Today* 4 Sept. 2002: A13
identifying fans’ needs common to all sports. The data may give sports relations practitioners in other sports a better understanding of their teams’ fans and allow them to address their fans’ needs more effectively.

**Delimitations**

This study will not address all areas relevant to sports fan relations. This study addresses only topics dealing with professional sports teams; therefore, it does not study information concerning amateur, collegiate or high school sports.

The study focuses on the relationship between professional sports teams and their fans and the role of the public relations professional in fostering that relationship. Information concerning team players, coaches and management will be included, but topics related to an organization’s internal communication are not. This study deals only with the relationship between professional sports organizations and their fans.

This thesis will measure fan attitude over the course of a professional sports team’s season. Because fan attitude can be affected by numerous variables such as media coverage, player perception and management decisions, the researcher cannot assume that the opinions of all fans are affected only by team performance. Similarly, the researcher cannot assume that all changes in fan attitude result from public relations efforts.

This study examines the relationships between the Philadelphia Flyers Professional Hockey Team and its fans by analyzing the levels of fan interest, loyalty and satisfaction over the course of the 2003-04 season. In examining these relationships, the researcher can analyze only results of these studies and consider possible answers based on the
presented information. This thesis does not draw clear solutions for all professional sports organizations experiencing problems with their relationships with fans.

Because this thesis deals with a Philadelphia-based professional sports team, sports relations practitioners in other cities may have less difficulty with their fan relations than is the case here. Philadelphia sports fans are renowned for vociferous, unapologetic treatment toward their sports teams. Bergen County Times writer, Dan Dunkin explained what is known as the “Philly Phenomenon” in his article on a one-time Phillies third basemen’s return to the city.

“…an illustration of a Philly fan cupping his filthy, sudsy mouth like a bullhorn while leaning over a rail at Veterans Stadium, spewing invective at a millionaire athlete whose performance threatens virtually an entire metropolitan area’s self-esteem. The prevailing national view has long been that the City of Brotherly Love leads the free world in the free speech right to boo. We did not invent it, but brother, do we vent it. We’ve defined it and refined it.”

Illustrations of Philadelphia fans’ behavior include booing a Dallas Cowboy football player who was temporarily paralyzed, shooting emergency flares onto the field during a Monday night football game and hurling thousands of snowballs at the opposing players and coaches following a blizzard. Perhaps the most notorious example of the Philadelphia fan occurred at a late-December Eagles football game when fans booed Santa Claus during a halftime-Christmas show. Baseball great and one-time Phillie, Pete

---

10 Dan Dunkin, “Wearing the Boo Badge of Honor,” Bergen County Times 17 Aug. 2003
Rose said, “Some of these people [Philadelphia Fans] would boo the crack in the Liberty Bell.”

This study recommends techniques for sports relations practitioners in all cities based on an examination of Philadelphia fan attitudes during an on-going Philadelphia-based sports team’s season.

**Purpose**

Researcher Robert Madrigal found that fans who are satisfied by their experiences at sporting events are more likely to return to similar sporting events in the future. He found that the identification a fan has for a favorite team is the greatest factor influencing fan satisfaction and whether or not a fan will return to a future sporting event.\(^1\) Clearly, the bond between a team and its fans is the most important determinant in repeat sporting event consumption. Therefore, the success of a professional sports organizations depends on sports relations practitioners and their role as team ambassadors to fans.

This thesis will replicate a similar thesis completed in 1999 by Rowan University graduate student, Laura Litrenta. That thesis studied the losing season of the 1998-99 Philadelphia Eagles professional football team and its effects on Eagles’ fans; this thesis studies the Philadelphia Flyers professional hockey team’s 2003-04 season. Like Litrenta’s study, which sought to find ways for sports team’s public relations practitioners to increase fan interest for a losing team, this study identifies ways to improve fan opinion. However, unlike Litrenta’s study, this study focuses on an ongoing

---

\(^1\) "Other Infamous Fans," 16 Oct. 2003  
<http://www.thestate.com/mld/state/2003/10/16/sports/7024680.htm>  
season to determine if public relations practitioners can improve fan attitude both when a team performs poorly as well as when it is successful. To determine the effect a winning season has on fan opinion, this study asks fans to compare their level of identification with this season’s Flyers team versus last year’s team.

In addition, Litrenta’s thesis studied a team with a 16-game regular season schedule. This thesis studies a team with an 82-game regular season. The research suggests that season length affects fan attitude and interest. This thesis analyzes fan attitude as the season progresses. In addition, the thesis compares fan attitude from both halves of the season. Based on fan suggestions, this study offers professional sports relations practitioners techniques to improve fan relations when their team’s performance suffers and ways practitioners can further strengthen fan relations when their team succeeds.

Two hypotheses form the basis of this thesis.

**H1: It is expected that media coverage will decrease as a professional sports team’s performance decreases.** When a team performs poorly, both the quantity and quality of its media coverage will decrease because the newsworthy angle is no longer the team itself, but is now the disgruntled fans and the media’s “Monday-morning quarterback” coverage. The media’s coverage will no longer be on the failure of the team, but on individual players, their performance and the team’s management. Because the media’s coverage of a losing team consists of such repetitive stories about the team’s poor performances, the lack of fresh newsworthy material eventually forces the media to find other things to report on. Freelance sportswriter and journalist, Jamie Fitzpatrick wrote that during a poor season or losing streak the only noteworthy item is a team’s consistent
Readers of a newspaper’s sports section and listeners of sports radio become bored with the same stories about how bad their teams are so the media stop reporting about them.

**H2: A professional sports team’s public relations department can positively affect fan attitude even when team performance suffers.** Most researchers agree that fans’ identification with their favorite teams dictates the amount of satisfaction they derive from watching their teams perform and subsequently the likelihood of them attending future “performances.” Most would assume that a team’s success rate is the single greatest influence on determining fan identification. According to Cialdini’s “BIRGing” and CORFing” theory, fans will disassociate themselves from their teams when they lose.  

However, researcher Debra A. Laverie suggests that a team’s performance is not as great a factor in determining fan satisfaction as most would believe.

According to Laverie, sports organizations should recognize that most fans will attend sporting events regardless of team performance and that they can provide a steady stream of revenue when the team suffers continued losses. Levarie writes, “…it may be beneficial for marketers to provide special promotions for these fans; promotions that provide fans with a means of maintaining their ‘fan identities.’”

Clearly Levarie believes that sports organizations can at least maintain positive relations with existing fans even if they cannot attract new, “bandwagon” fans. Fans may

---

14 Robert B. Cialdini, et al, 366-375
16 Debra A. Levarie, et al, 239
appreciate and profit from promotions, events and contests organized by the team intended to preserve both fan interest and fan identity during losing streaks.

However, the researcher does assume that when a professional sports team suffers continued losses, the majority of fans will become disinterested, frustrated and depressed as a direct result of the team’s poor performance. The researcher also assumes that sports public relations practitioners can positively affect the attitudes of these fans during losing streaks, although such change is difficult.

San Jose State University professor Dennis Wilcox writes that sports team’s public relations departments face an uphill battle when trying to positively affect fan opinions when their team’s performance suffers. He writes, “When a team is an inept loser...the sports publicist’s life turns grim. He or she must find ways to soothe public displeasure and, through methods...create a mood of patient hopefulness: ‘Wait ‘til next year!’ ”17

Procedure

As a sports team suffers continued losses, a majority of fans lose interest to the point that the media can no longer market its coverage of the team. The main story is the losing itself, and not the team. Over time, fans become less interested in hearing about how bad their favorite team is. Interest in a losing team eventually wanes to the point where both local and national media outlets must find other things to cover. Because most fans do not care about losing teams, they will not watch, read or listen to coverage of them and the media can no longer market them. When fans stop caring, the media stop caring.

Conversely, when a team continues to win, more and more fans become interested in the team, and in turn, the media provide more and more coverage of the team to satisfy fans’ increasing demand for more stories about the team.

During the 2003 season, Missouri University’s Tigers football team had only their second season with eight or more wins. The media covered the team more that season than it had in the previous two decades; coverage came from networks like ABC, cable outlets like Fox SportsNet and the Armed Forces Network, which televised games to U.S. troops worldwide.

Missouri University’s athletics department directly attributes the increased coverage to the team’s winning record. Tigers’ coach, Gary Pinkel noted, “If you win enough, they’ll put you on TV.”

In comparison, teams experiencing losing seasons often find it difficult to attract any media attention. Professional sports teams are not immune to this phenomenon. For instance, the National Football League’s teams are constrained by blackout rules, which state that if a home game does not sellout at least 72 hours before kickoff, no TV station within a 75-mile radius can broadcast the game.

Seven weeks into the 2002 football season, The Cincinnati Bengals games had lost all seven games and accordingly received very little media attention.

The Cincinnati Post described the situation this way, “It’s Official- Not surprisingly, Sunday’s game with Tennessee at Paul Brown Stadium is not a sellout and will not be

---

shown on local television. This will be the 20th game played at PBS, and only seven of those games have sold out.\textsuperscript{19}

Without winning records, teams lose fans and without fans, the media stop covering teams.

With media coverage depending so much on fan interests, the job of the sports team public relations practitioner becomes even more important. No team can have winning seasons every year, so teams must find other ways to attract and maintain fan interest and in turn, garner media coverage.

Past research on fan behavior identifies involvement, identification and satisfaction as key factors affecting fan interest.\textsuperscript{20} During a season, most fans experience situational involvement with the team, i.e. watching games, reading articles on the team, etc.\textsuperscript{21}

However, many fans have long-term associations with the team, often referred to as “diehard” fans.\textsuperscript{22}

Gene Newman, a features writer for \textit{tagmag.com} writes of his experience as a Philadelphia Eagles fan during the team’s dismal 1998-99 season in which the team won just five games.

“This being an especially bad season for my team, I expected a crushing loss. However, my boys in green pulled it out in the last minute and a half. I can’t remember the last time I shouted my throat bloody and was that excited at a sporting event. It’s moments like that, no matter how fleeting, that I love being

\textsuperscript{20} Debra S. Levarie, et al, 227
\textsuperscript{21} Debra S. Levarie, et al, 227
an Eagles fan."^2^3

For the sports relations practitioner, fans like this present the best opportunity for positively affecting fan interest during a losing season. These fans, which identify strongly with a team, experience the most situational involvement during a season. When people experience high levels of situational involvement, they are more likely to return to games on a regular basis, purchase team-related merchandise, etc.^^2^4 Thus, it becomes possible for a professional sports team's public relations practitioner to develop and maintain fan interest even during losing seasons.

**Terminology**

To understand this thesis's problem, its purpose and recommendations, this researcher will define key terms used in the study.

**Content Analysis**- Professor Emeritus, Paul D. Leedy, of the American University defines content analysis as, "A detailed systematic examination of the contents of a particular body of material...for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes or biases within that material."^^2^5 This thesis uses a content analysis of *The Philadelphia Daily News* and 610-WIP sports radio.

**Fan**- a person devoted to a particular sports team, its players and the organization.

Researcher J. Pooley differentiated fans from spectators by describing the unique, strong

emotional ties that fans have for their favorite teams. He writes, "Whereas a spectator of
sport will observe a spectacle and forget it very quickly, the fan continues his interest
until the intensity of feeling toward the team becomes so great that parts of every day are
devoted to either his team or in some instances, to the broad realm of the sport itself."\textsuperscript{26}

**Fan Interest**- the level of a fan's concern with his or her favorite team. Consumer
advocate, Ralph Nader, noted that sports fans are unique in their willingness to support
their favorite team at any cost. "It's a strange thing. It isn't anything like the car, food or
drug industries. People can be angry and pay through the nose, but they'll still root for
their team."\textsuperscript{27}

**Fan Involvement**- the amount of time and resources a fan devotes to his or her
favorite team. This involvement includes include game attendance, time spent watching
games as well as money spent on team-related merchandise.

**Fan Loyalty**- the degree to which a fan feels attached to his or her favorite team; a
fan's sense of being a part of the team's organizational "family." In his article on fan
attitudes and society, Eric Leifer writes of fan loyalty, "One often hears a sense of guilt
among fans if they fail to watch or attend a game involving "their" team, as if their
absence could somehow be responsible for the team's loss. Support becomes a show of
strength, like foot soldiers behind a mounted commander."\textsuperscript{28}

**Fan Psychology (mentality)** - the cognition of a fan towards his or her favorite team,
its players and the organization; how a fan feels about his or her team. For instance, the
overwhelming feelings of joy fans experience when their teams win are an apparent and

\textsuperscript{27} John Solomon, "Whose Game is it Anyway?," Washington Monthly Vol. 31, Dec. 1999: 31
expected outward display of fan psychology. In addition, criminal behavior such as
rioting by fans after both losses and wins of important games are a more pervasive
display of fan psychology. Many psychologists term such behavior as “de-
individuation.” They
define it as the shared identity among fans that allows them to psychologically remove
themselves from their individual knowledge of right and wrong, so as a group they feel
no personal responsibility for their actions.\(^\text{29}\)

Then governor of California, Ronald Reagan, is quoted as saying about sports, “You
can feel a “clean hatred” for your opponent. It’s a clean hatred because it’s only
symbolic in a jersey.”\(^\text{30}\)

**Fan Relations**- a specific organizational department designed to foster goodwill
between a team and its fans. It functions as a source of information about the team and
the sport for fans.

**Intercept Study**- a nonscientific, random sampling of people’s opinions concerning a
particular issue. This thesis contains an intercept study of Philadelphia Flyers fans and
their opinions on the Flyers’ 2003-04 season.

**Losing Streak**- when a sports team loses three or more consecutive games.

**Philadelphia Daily News**- Philadelphia, Pa., based newspaper. Owned by Knight
Ridder Newspapers, Inc., The Daily News is a city-oriented tabloid. The paper is best
known for its coverage of local news and sports, commentary, a willingness to be
unorthodox and an uncommon bond with its readers.\(^\text{31}\) For example, in covering a last

1985: 22
minute Flyers win during a long road schedule, the Daily News described it as, “Giving up 38 shots last night. That’s not the way the Flyers like to play hockey.” In contrast, the Daily News’s sister-paper, the Philadelphia Inquirer, described the same game as, “The Flyers looked weary and yet they prevailed playing their fifth game in eight days.”

Additionally, the Daily News’s article did not cover the actual game, i.e. shots, saves, minutes, etc., until the sixth paragraph. The Inquirer did in the second paragraph.

**Philadelphia Flyers Professional Hockey Team**- the Philadelphia, Pa., based professional hockey team belonging to the Eastern Conference of the Atlantic Division in the National Hockey League (NHL). During the 2003-04 season, Ken Hitchcock was the head coach, Bob Clarke was the general manager and Ed Snider was the chairperson. The team’s fan base includes Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware.

**Professional Sports Organization/Sports Team**- a sports organization belonging to a nationally recognized league, which profits from ticket and merchandise sales; they are organizations that emphasize the business aspects of organized sports. Large fan bases and equally large revenues characterize professional sports organizations. Alan R. Eagleson, Executive Director of the NHL Players’ Association and a member of the Canadian Hockey Board said of the business of professional hockey, “…the owners of professional sports enterprises have always considered themselves to be business entrepreneurs.”

---

< http://www.philly.com/mld/philly/contact_us/about_np2/>  
Sports Organization (team) Management - the executive division of a sports organization that determines the organization’s policies and makes decisions regarding policy changes. The division consists of the organization’s owners, board of directors, general manager, coach and advisors.

Sports Radio, 610 WIP - Philadelphia, Pa.,-based AM sports/talk radio station. The station’s programming consists of broadcasts of Philadelphia sports teams’ games, commentaries and listener call-in shows.

Sports Relations - a management function combining the elements of conventional public relations with the unique, sports-oriented functions of fan relations. It is a holistic management of communication between a sports organization and its publics, e.g. fans, media, community, etc. Wilcox writes, “...using the normal tools of public relations—press kits, statistics, interviews, television appearances, and the like—to distribute information. But dealing with facts is only part of their role. They also try to stir emotions.”

---

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Fan Psychology

The majority of psychologists, sociologists and mental health researchers studying sports fan psychology recognize identification as the predominating factor affecting fan mentality. These researchers found that the development and maintenance of a fan's identity as well as the comparison of that identity against other identities determines why sports fans think and behave as they do.

Identity Theory

Psychologist and researcher Sheldon Stryker noted that identity theory explains why people act a certain way, in this case, why sports fans behave as they do. Researcher Edward Petkus defined identity theory in two parts: the role (in this case the sports fan) and the identity associated with that role (in this case as team supporter). Sociologist and University of California Professor Peter Burke says that people act in a way that causes others to think highly of them. Burke asserts that someone the individual seeks admiration from will affect how the fan behaves. That is, fans' identity and subsequent actions will reflect the attitudes of those around them, namely other fans, from whom the fan seeks admiration.

Social Identity Theory

Social psychologist Henri Tajfel found that a form of identity theory, called social identity theory, further explains why people, namely sports fans, think and act as they do. Unlike identity theory, which explains role and role behaviors, social identity theory seeks to explain group processes and relations within a group. This theory involves three steps: (1) categorization (2) identification and (3) comparison. Based on Leon Festingers' identity theories, Tajfel says that during categorization, people attach themselves to other individuals and groups that are either similar to them or more successful than they are.39 According to the literature, this may explain why fans act as collective units such as chanting and booing the same things at the same time.

1) Categorization

Sociologist Richard Jenkins says that social identification theory, "...refers to the way in which individuals and collectives are distinguished in their social relations with other individuals or collectives."40 For instance, Jenkins' definition could include the ways Philadelphia Flyers fans differs from a New York Rangers fans as far as how they seek to differentiate themselves and establish their unique identity. Vanderbilt University Professor Peggy Thoits adds that social identity theory also categorizes how others accept individuals.41 That is, the things fans do to gain acceptance and admiration from fellow fans, such as fans painting their face in the team's colors to outwardly illustrate their loyalty to their fellow fans.

40 Richard Jenkins, Social Identity (New York: Routledge, 1996) 4
Texas Tech University marketing professor Debra Laverie adds that social identity is important to the study of fan psychology because of its societal pervasiveness. Levarie writes,

“Social identity is applicable because fan behavior is socially visible, involves relationships with others, can lead to the formation of a fan role and one can experience satisfaction with that role. Those people with high identity salience are more likely to participate in identity related activities...those with high identity salience for being a fan of a sporting team will attend games more often than those low in identity salience.”  

2) Identification

Burke defines the second step of social identity theory, identification, as, “a set of meanings applied to the self in a social situation defining what it means to be who one is.” Sociologists Edgar and Marie Borgatta add that the person we choose to be is determined by how much satisfaction we derive from and how committed we are to being that person. For sports fans, the level of satisfaction they derive from being fans determines how committed they are to their roles as fans and consequently their commitment to their favorite team. Madrigal says that identification as well as the unique experiences associated with watching sporting events contributes to satisfaction. Levarie adds, “Attachment to a team could be an important part of one’s self. The more attachment a person feels to a team, the more important that identity becomes to their

---

42 Debra S. Laverie, et al 2000, 229
45 Robert Madrigal, 206
sense of self.” University of New Orleans professor Frederic Dimanche goes further saying fans use a sports team for self-concept maintenance. This could account for why some fans become “diehards,” while others remain relatively unaffected by their attachment to their favorite team. That is, an ordinary fan becomes a “diehard” fan because he depends wholly on his role as team booster for his identity and therefore relishes in being the “diehard.” Burke agrees saying, “The core of an identity is the categorization of the self as an occupant of a role.” Here, that role is the “diehard” fan.

3) Comparison

The third step in the social identity theory, comparison, deals with individuals’ desire to gain acceptance and favor by those they has attached themselves. For sports fans, that includes fellow fans. Social psychologist Michael Hogg says identity is formed as a result from membership within a desired group. Tajfel adds that individuals strive to maintain these social identities by favorably comparing themselves to group members and non-group members. This may explain why Green Bay Packers fans refer to themselves as “Cheeseheads” or that Cleveland Browns fans call their stadium the “Dog Pound.” This allows them to separate themselves from other football fans and reinforce their common identity. Researchers George McCall and Jerry Simmons say that human interactions like those experienced by football fans in Green Bay and Cleveland are

46 Debra S. Levarie, et al 2000, 230
inextricably linked to the fans' definition of themselves and their world. Tajfel adds that these interactions provide, "...a system of orientation which helps to create and define the individual's place in society." The literature shows that sports fans maintain their identities by reinforcing their commonalities and by distancing themselves from rival fans by wearing team merchandise, i.e. foam cheese hats in Green Bay and by separating themselves from other fans, i.e. hanging effigies of star players on rival teams. In addition, sociologist Peter Callero says that as fans become more satisfied with their identity, they are more likely to take part in the activities that reinforce this identity, such as viewing more games, buying more team merchandise, etc. Researchers agree that this identity is so powerful that it also affects fans' ability to accurately judge the actions of their fellow fans; even when that behavior includes illegal activity. In a study on fan behavior at Murray State University, psychologists Daniel Wann and Thomas Dolan used pen and paper surveys to measure the correlation between fan identity and fan perception of the University's basketball team. They found that highly identified fans reported more favorably about fans of their team than rival fan groups, even though both fan groups performed identical behavior. Psychologist Marilyn Brewer agrees saying in-group favoritism is more prevalent than out-group derogation. The literature shows that the commonalities that fellow sports fans share

seem to essentially blind them to both their actions as well as the actions of their fellow fans.

Moreover, Wann and Dolan found that sports fans with a higher identification with the team were more likely to overestimate the performance of their team during past seasons as well as overestimate their team’s ability in future seasons. Wann later found this phenomenon true for teams with both winning and losing records.

### Fan versus Spectator

Social psychology researchers often define fans as those individuals with a great emotional affiliation with their favorite team. Indiana University psychology professor Ed Hirt defines a fan as “an affiliation in which a great deal of emotional significance and value are derived from group membership.” Sociologist Gunther Luschen describes a fan as, “...the person who thinks, talks about or is oriented towards sports even when he is not actually observing, reading or listening to an account of a specific sports event.”

In contrast, researchers have defined spectators as those individuals who merely observe a sporting event but do not have a strong emotional connection to the team or its players. Daniel Wann along with sociologist Merrill Melnick differentiates fan and spectator. They write, “(fans) are individuals who are interested in and follow a sport, team and/or athlete. Spectators are those who actively witness a sporting event in person or through some form of media.”

---

adds that fans will not forget about a team, but will devote a part of their life to that team whereas spectators will easily forget the team after observing a sporting event.

**Psychological Effects of Being a Fan**

Most researchers agree that the primary psychological effect of being a sports fan is the sense of belonging and the inclusion or membership into a group fans feel. University of Wisconsin sociology professors David Snow and Pamela Oliver note that the effect of being a fan is a sense of belonging and camaraderie with those like themselves. It helps to define “us” against “them.” Sociologist D. Zillman adds, “It appears that sports fanship can unit and provide feelings of belongingness that are beneficial to individuals and the social setting in which they live.”

In addition to feelings of belonging, being a sports fan provides the opportunity to participate in activities the fan may not otherwise be able to participate. Wann and University of Kansas psychology professor Nyla Branscombe say that sports fanaticism allows people to be part of a sporting event even though they may not be able to participate in it. For example, those fans who are physically unable to participate in sports can vicariously engage in the activities of the athletes they are cheering.

**BIRGing and CORFing**

Based on Fritz Heider’s Balance and Cognitive Dissonance Theories, which state that individuals raise their self-esteem by associating with those who are successful and

---


25
separating themselves from those who are unsuccessful, Robert Cialdini’s BIRGing and CORFing theory explains why winning teams attract more fans than losing teams.65

Regent’s Professor at Arizona State University, Cialdini’s BIRG (Basking in Reflected Glory) refers to fans’ tendency to “share in the glory of a successful other with whom they are in some way associated.”66 For instance, BIRGing explains fans’ inclination to wear team merchandise after a win to publicize their connection to the team, allowing him to vicariously associate with the team’s success.67

University of Oregon Professor Robert Madrigal adds, “The behavior manifestation of an increased association may take the form of wearing clothing that features the team’s logo or extolling the virtues of the team to others.”68 Cialdini says BIRGing occurs when fans publicize their connection for the team through clothes, painting face, etc. even though the fans have not contributed to the team’s success.69 Social psychologist C. Snyder adds that human nature makes people want to be associated with success and those who are successful.70

In contrast, the tendency for fans to CORF (Cut off Reflected Failure) explains why sports fans disassociate themselves from losing teams. Hirt says that CORFing is an image protection tactic that allows fans to distance themselves from a losing team and its lack of success.71 However, Wann and Branscombe found that “diehard” fans believe that being a fan is an important part of who they are and persevere even when their team

66 Robert B. Cialdini, et al, 366
67 Robert B. Cialdini, et al, 371
68 Robert Madrigal, 227
69 Robert B. Cialdini, et al, 371
71 Ed Hirt, et al, 728
The literature shows that CORFing may be a defense mechanism that many fans use to protect themselves from their teams’ failures; nonetheless, some fans may remain unaffected by their teams’ performance. In addition, Madrigal found that fans with a high identification with their team are more likely to BIRG while those with less identification are more likely to CORF.⁷³

While Wann and Cialdini studied fans of amateur sports, University of Missouri-Rolla psychology professor Christian End applied the BIRGing and CORFing theories to professional sports. End studied NFL fans that used the internet to relate to their team when it won, (BIRG). End found that fans, especially in the post-season, will use the internet to BIRG and will denigrate fans of unsuccessful teams to boost their own feelings of joy.⁷⁴ Unfortunately, this researcher could not locate any information on BIRGing and CORFing as it applies to fans of professional hockey.

Psychological Factors Affecting Fan Satisfaction

Although the success of a sports team may logically seem to be the primary factor affecting fan satisfaction, several researchers have found factors other than team performance that can greatly affect fan satisfaction. For teams with a history of losing seasons, or marginal seasons like the Flyers, this information may enable those teams’ public relations practitioners to affect fan behavior regardless of team performance.

Social psychology researchers Marsha Richins and Peter Bloch suggest that fans’ level of situational involvement (SI) and enduring involvement (EI) are key determinants

---

⁷² Daniel Wann and Nyla Branscombe, 126
⁷³ Robert Madrigal, 222
affecting their satisfaction. Richins and Bloch define situational involvement as the passing interest in something, for instance, fans' interest in their team during the season. They define enduring involvement as the ongoing interest in something, for instance, fans' continuing interest in the local sports team during the off-season. Richins and Bloch assert that when people experience high levels of situational involvement, they are more likely to experience high levels of satisfaction with products and services associated with the situation. The researchers say that regardless of team performance fans' level of satisfaction will rise during the season and drop during the off-season.

Levarie agrees that situational involvement positively relates to satisfaction. Levarie asserts that satisfied fans are more likely to attend games on a regular basis. Levarie adds that winning is not the only key motivator in determining fan satisfaction. People with a salient fan identity are more likely to attend games, regardless of the success of the team. Laverie says that by increasing fans' situational and enduring involvement, marketers of sports teams can increase fan attachment to a team, thereby ensuring fan interest regardless of team performance. Laverie states,

"...it is important for sports marketers to take actions that enhance fans' situational involvement, enduring involvement and attachment. For example, by encouraging additional media coverage of their team and its players, managers could enhance involvement. In addition, promotions such as contest would be doubly beneficial. The contests would both encourage fans to be more involved and facilitate interaction between groups of fans and players, which

---

76 Debra Levarie, et al, 233
77 Debra Levarie, et al, 237
could enhance attachment."  

However, some researchers assert that fan expectations determine the effects of winning and losing on fan satisfaction.

Sociologist Lee Sigelman argues that in situations where winning is expected, losing can be particularly traumatic and the motive to CORF may be unusually strong. However, when winning is not the norm, losing becomes acceptable. In contrast, Madrigal states that the disconfirmation of fan expectations does not elicit an especially strong reaction by the fan, one way or another. However, Madrigal admits that fan expectations will increase as team performance improves.

In addition, there also exists some disagreement among researchers as far as the effects of fan satisfaction on BIRGing and CORFing. Madrigal states that BIRGing and enjoyment are separate, each with an independent effect on fan satisfaction. Madrigal says the enjoyment derived from watching a game has a greater effect on satisfaction than BIRGing. However, Wann and Branscombe state that the BIRGing phenomenon is found primarily among fans that follow winning teams, but the self-esteem benefits of watching sports are unrelated to team success. Wann and Dolan say that fans can gain an identity boost like that experienced during BIRGing by manipulating their perceptions of their fellow fans, i.e. thinking that they are better than their rival fans. Wann and Dolan go on to say that fans achieve this identity boost regardless of team success.

---

78 Debra Levarie, et al, 236-237  
80 Robert Madrigal, 229  
81 Robert Madrigal, 221  
82 Daniel Wann and Nyla Branscombe, 103-117  
83 Daniel Wann and Thomas Dolan, 335
The literature shows that the level of association and identification fans have for their favorite team seems to be the greatest factor affecting fan satisfaction. In addition, the literature on fan psychology also illustrates that the level of fan identification determines how much team allegiance affects sports fans’ mentalities, specifically their perceptions of both themselves as well as their fellow and rival fans.

**Fan Behavior**

The literature shows that identification significantly influences the psychological processes of sports fans; therefore, it makes sense that these affiliations should also affect fan behavior. Many researchers have sought to explain the phenomenon of fan behavior—both good and bad.

Wann says that the psychological processes of sports fans can affect fan behavior, both positively and negatively. Escapism from everyday life, increased excitement, entertainment, group membership as well as socialization are just a few of the factors that can positively affect fan behavior.\(^\text{84}\) Zillman believes that sports fans’ social involvement can produce benefits similar to that of participation in sporting events.\(^\text{85}\) That is, fans experience feelings similar to those felt by the athletes they are cheering. Zillman adds that fans actually feel the same emotions of jubilation an athletes feel when they score a winning touchdown, homerun, etc. Conversely, fans experience the same emotions of depression as the athletes who actually lose the game, i.e. throw the interception, give up the homerun, etc. In addition, there have been theories that seek to explain negative sports fan behavior. University of Alberta sociology professor Garry J. Smith theorized

that viewing sporting events appeals to fans’ primitive nature leading to aggressive behavior.86

Most researchers agree that the emotional impact associated with watching sports does affect fan behavior, i.e. fans are happiest and satisfied when their teams win and upset and frustrated when their teams lose.87 Researchers agree that this theory along with the notion of “group mentality” causes both positive and negative fan behavior.

Group mentality describes how a group of separate individuals, in this case sports fans, can share the same ideas and perform the same actions even though they may have never met before.88 Group mentality, also known as “groupthink,” describes when groups of people do not consider the repercussions of their behavior, seek unanimity at the expense of quality decisions and lead to feelings that the group is infallible.89 This helps to explain how sports fans can resort to violence as a group, even though none of the fans may act this way if they were alone. “Groupthink” also seeks to explain how conformity contributes to a fan adopting the mentality of the group, even if the individual does not agree with the group’s actions and/or ideas.90

Fan Violence

Following the 2002 NCAA college basketball championships, University of Maryland fans rioted through the streets of College Park, Md., after the school’s victory over Indiana. Rioting Maryland fans injured police and started fires. Similar riots near

89 Janis Irving, Victims of Groupthink (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972)
Indiana’s campus resulted in 40 injuries to rioters, ranging from burns to alcohol poisoning as well as 21 injured police officers and approximately $500,000 in property damage. The events led California State University writer, Phil Witte to comment:

"Winning (or almost winning) should be a time of celebration, not destruction. Unfortunately, when the mob mentality takes over, the anonymity of the crowd empowers people to do things their rational mind usually prohibits."  

The League of Fans, a sports industry watchdog group formed by Ralph Nader, identifies “violent or unreasonable fan behavior” as: (1) rowdy and vulgar behavior which has the potential to escalate into violence, (2) storming the field of play causing trampling of other fans, (3) fighting, (4) rushing into or out of a stadium or arena, (5) pushing/shoving out of hostility, (6) excessive drunkenness, (7) throwing objects onto the playing field or amongst other fans, (8) any sort of rioting or mob behavior. The literature shows that many experts agree that the frequency of such behavior is steadily increasing.

In November 2002, Columbus, Ohio police arrested 49 fans for setting fires and overturning cars following an Ohio State University football game. A month earlier, Ball State University student Andrew Bourne was paralyzed when a broken goalpost fell on him after fans rushed the field. The literature also shows that incidents like these are not unique to college sports.

---

In 2003, a father and his 15-year-old son attacked Kansas City Royals first base coach Tom Gamboa. Gamboa suffered permanent hearing loss from his injuries. A 24-year-old man was charged with assault with a deadly weapon after throwing a cell phone at Texas Rangers right fielder Carl Everett. Everett commented, “This crowd has always been surly. They throw stuff all the time.”

The literature shows that internationally, the problem of fan violence is even more pervasive than in the United States. Tennis star, Monica Seles was stabbed while competing in Germany in 1993 by a fan sympathizing for Seles’ opponent. Moreover, in Europe and Africa, nearly 500 deaths have been attributed to fan violence over the past five years.

St. Petersburg Times sports columnist John Romano called such fan violence “riots that have gone beyond silly and far beyond bothersome.” Romano adds, “They are stupid, dangerous and disasters-in-waiting.”

The literature shows that “groupthink” mentality is at the heart of fan behavior and that fan behavior can often lead to violence. However, in addition to “groupthink,” the literature shows that sports fans’ feelings of mistreatment by the leagues, team owners and even their favorite players also affects fan behavior. The League of Fans says the sports industry is to blame for the disgruntlement that leads to violence. The organization writes,

“As loyal fans, we commit ourselves to a team, purchase tickets to the games, buy the merchandise, pay for parking and concessions and what do we get in return? The team owners threaten to leave town if we don’t pay for a new stadium with our tax dollars, the players leave for bigger salaries, the owners and players feud to the point of a strike or lockout, and ticket prices go up year after year.”

Sports Fans as Consumers

In 2003, ESPN’s Ultimate Standings study substantiated the anger and frustration expressed by The League of Fans. ESPN says the comprehensive study of sports fans, “produces a comprehensive, enlightening, multifaceted study on the power, attraction, relationship and very meaning of sports to people of all ages and backgrounds across the U.S.”

The Markitecture research firm polled 1,003 Canadian and U.S. sports fans 13 years of age and older. In addition, 40,000 fans using ESPN.com were asked to rate their favorite team in 21 areas ranging from “players who always give their best effort” to “frequent fan promotions, contests and giveaways.”

The study then divided the data into eight categories with a 3 percent margin of error. The categories included:

1) "Bang for the Buck" This measured how efficiently teams produced victories from funding received from fans over the past three seasons. (19.2% of fans found this most important)

2) "Fan Relations" This is the ease of access to players, coaches and management. (18.2% of fans found this most important)

3) "Ownership" This measures owners' honesty, loyalty to players and the city. (15.9% of fans found this most important)

4) "Stadium Experience" This measures the friendliness of environment and quality of game-day promotions. (12.5% of fans found this most important)

5) "Affordability" This measures the team's price of tickets, parking and concessions. (12.5% of fans found this most important)

6) "Players" This category measures fans' perception of player effort on the field and their likeability off the field. (12% of fans found this most important)

7) "Coach/Management" This measures their strong on-field leadership (5.3% of fans found this most important)

8) "Championships" This is the number of titles the team won or is expected to win. (4.4% of fans found this most important)

In addition, the study found 58 percent of fans think sporting events are predetermined, with 79 percent believing teams cheat in order to win. The study also found 57 percent of respondents have risked money on games in the last three years.

The study found women are twice as likely to cry over a win (34 percent to 17 percent) than men are. However, men are more likely to bet on sports (63 percent to 50
percent) than women, cheer an opponent’s injury (22-13) and fantasize about being their favorite sports hero (42-18).

Half of the respondents say their sports teams define their city’s identity while 76 percent of fans follow out-of-town sports teams and 47 percent root against local teams. The study measured each team within its respective sport.

The Detroit Red Wings ranked No. 1 in the professional hockey category. Below is a comparison of the Red Wings (eighth overall) and the Philadelphia Flyers (67th overall).

NOTE: The two teams are in comparison with 118 professional teams.

The study illustrates that the Flyers ticket costs, currently between $40 and $175 per person during the regular season, affects fans’ attitude toward the team as well as the likelihood of them spending discretionary income on the team. This may also explain

---

100 Marty Strasen, 2
why attendance at Flyers home games (19,221) is currently at the lowest point because the team moved into its new arena, the Wachovia Center, in 1996.102

Football Fan Club Magazine’s editor, James Clark explains reasons for fan behavior in an article on fans and their love/hate relationship with their teams.

“They (sports fans) may be season ticket holders and thus pay thousands of dollars to feel miserable, dejected, lied to, robbed and embarrassed. But they’re there the following year rooting the same losing team on. Their loyalty to their team rivals their loyalty to family and even God. It is this kind of loyalty that makes sports fans so different from any other kind of fan.”103


Factors Affecting Fan Relations

The function of fan relations is defined as "the coordination of the flow of information from teams to the press--and feeds the public hunger for sports news items, team data and player information. Fan relations also play an important "promotional" role in generating public interest, increasing teams' visibility and filling stadiums with fans."\(^{104}\)

Much of the existing literature focuses on what fan relations is rather than the factors affecting fan relations. While this literature provides information into the academic aspects of fan relations, it offers little insight into the "real world" aspects of fan relations.

Therefore, to understand fan relations better, the researcher will examine how economic factors, team management, athletes and sports media influence the relationship between fans and their favorite teams. This will provide a reference point to illustrate how teams combat poor relations as well as accentuate good relations with their fans in spite of these influences. In addition, the current state of the professional sports industry will be examined to further illustrate the role of fan relations and the many factors affecting its success as far as its ability to turn average fans into repeat buyers, i.e. "diehard" fans.

Economic Factors Affecting Fan Relations

Insight on the News author Eric Fisher wrote in a 2002 article that the declining interest in professional sports in America might ultimately force unpopular teams and sports out of business.

Fisher writes,

“The current state of big-time sports is a stark contrast to the heady days of the mid-to-late 1990s. Between 1993 and 1999, 15 new teams began play, and 42 stadiums and arenas were constructed for the NFL, NHL, NBA and MLB. Eight leagues of national prominence also were created. But while sports retains its viselike hold on American culture, the business climate in which it operates has changed.”

Fisher points to the “general state of the economy, higher ticket prices, increasing demands on free time, labor strife within pro leagues, duplicitous team owners, boorish millionaire players, lengthening game times and competing forms of entertainment” as the main reasons why fans are becoming less interested in sports. Those in professional sports agree that the popularity of sports in America is waning.

Texas Rangers director of marketing Jeff Overton said, “We can’t take for granted that people are going to come out. We have to make a compelling argument that the game is a good value.”

The literature shows that interest in all professional American sports is waning. In addition, even those teams that experience great success are not immune to the effects of

---

106 Eric Fisher, 30
fan disinterest. The Atlanta Braves, winners of 11 straight division championships, once
drew nearly four million fans per season, now they attract half that number following five
years of steadily declining attendance. Baseball’s most successful team, the New York
Yankees, is experiencing similar problems. The team’s attendance was down 16 percent
during the 2003 season compared to the year before.\(^{108}\) The literature shows that this
phenomenon affects other sports as well.

In the NHL, teams posted record losses of nearly $300 million in 2003, up 35 percent
from the previous year,\(^{109}\) despite a 2002 survey conducted by The Bonham Group
showing that hockey fans were enthusiastic about the game. The losses come in spite of
findings that over three quarters of hockey fans (77.6 percent) said they liked the current
state of the NHL with 62.2 percent predicting it would be even better in the next five
years. Nearly all respondents (99 percent) agreed that the NHL is “a world-class league
with great live events, nonstop action and a powerful energetic style of play.”\(^{110}\)

Mike Humes, senior vice president for business operations with the Columbus Blue
Jackets says, “We think the arena experience we give our fans is one of the reasons why
we have such a great following.”\(^{111}\) However, the Blue Jackets have not made the
playoffs because they joined the league in 2001, but the team has approximately 13,500
season ticket holders with a plus 90 percent retention rate.

Another NHL expansion team, the Nashville Predators, experienced a similar boon in
fan attendance despite never appearing in the playoffs. Gerry Helper, Predators vice

\(^{108}\) Associate Press, “War, Sluggish Economy Cited for Rise in Empty Seats,” ESPN.com 28 April 2003, 2

\(^{109}\) Associate Press, “Rising Player Salaries Mostly to Blame,” ESPN.com 19 Sept. 2003, 1 Nov. 2003
<http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/print?id=1619309&type=story>

\(^{110}\) Dean Bonham, “Hockey Fans Love Their Sport, Survey Indicates,” Rocky Mountain News 2 March
2002: 5C

<http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/print?id=1608468&type=story>
president of communications and development said, “When you are an expansion
franchise there is a honeymoon period, but when you are building from within there is a
lull in there.” Helper adds, “People said make a coaching change, make a big trade...fans
give you pressure to do that. But it’s only if those changes coincide with results on the
ice do you get a long-term response in terms of attendance.”\footnote{112}

In contrast to the success of expansion teams in the NHL, established teams like the
New Jersey Devils experienced a seven percent drop in attendance the same season the
Predators and Blue Jackets experienced their fan acceptance. The Devils won the Stanley
Cup that season.

Similarly, in the NBA, attendance dropped 15 percent in 2001-2002 season. In
addition, America’s most popular sport, football, is also losing fan revenues caused by a
drop in television viewership.

Timothy Maier, columnist for Insight on the News writes that TV ratings for the NFL
are “going in the tank.”\footnote{113} Dave Grant, a sports-marketing agent for Velocity Sports and
Entertainment adds that NFL ratings are down because “there are so many other places
that viewers can go. The days of massive ratings for sports are gone.”\footnote{114}

In addition to competing media, the literature shows another economic factor affecting
fan relations in all professional sports is the rising cost being a fan, namely the rising cost
of tickets. The League of Fans write,

“\text{As loyal fans, we commit ourselves to a}
\text{team, purchase tickets to the games, buy}
\text{merchandise, pay for parking and}
\text{concessions, and what do we get in return?}
\text{The team owners threaten to leave town if}"

\footnote{112}{Darren Rovell, 3 Sept. 2003}
\footnote{113}{Timothy Maier, “Fans May Be Out at Home,” \textit{Insight on the News}, Jan. 15 2001: 33}
\footnote{114}{Timothy Maier, 33}
we don’t pay for new stadiums with our tax
dollars, the players leave for bigger salaries,
the owners and players feud to the point of a
strike or lockout, and ticket prices go up year
after year.”

In 2003, the New York Islanders increased average ticket prices by 38.3 percent, and
the New Jersey Devils raised ticket prices by 24.5 percent to $68.08 for an average ticket.
The cost of a family of four to attend a hockey game after buying tickets, parking,
concessions and souvenirs increased 4.1 percent in 2003 to $256.23. In the NBA, the
costs come to $266.61, $258.50 in the NFL and $121.36 in the MLB. In addition,
ticket costs during the playoffs can often reach into the thousands of dollars. Bob
Ulbach, a former public relations director for the Chicago Cubs says that if the Cubs had
reached the World Series in 2003, asking prices for tickets could have run as high as
$10,000.

Atlanta Braves outfielder Chipper Jones adds, “I just think ticket prices have gotten so
outlandish, it’s tough for a family of four to come watch their team play. I think the
game will be fine, but something has to be done. I don’t know what it is.” Jones
currently has a $90 million contract with the Braves.

Sports Psychologist Richard Lustberg adds,

“...ticket prices have gotten so outlandish, it’s tough for a family of four to come watch their team play. I think the game will be fine, but something has to be done. I don’t know what it is.”

---

115 League of Fans
116 CNN Money, “NHL Checks Ticket Prices,” CNNMoney.com, 1 Nov. 2003
117 Timothy Maier, 32
119 Associated Press, April 28, 2003
Your team isn’t producing wins, don’t go. Refreshments cost too much, boycott those franks.”

In contrast, Philadelphia Daily News columnist Sam Donnellon says that fans have every right to criticize the costs of being a sports fan, especially when revenues from fans finance the teams they cheer and boo for. Donnellon writes,

“And they (team management) accuse you fans of being unfaithful when your mouths open as wide as your wallet has over the years, and boos come out. Well, open them all you want, people. You pay their salaries. And you pay for their mistakes, too.”

Effects of Athletes on Fan Relations

The literature shows that fans can experience mistrust and resentment towards even their favorite players. Factors such as escalating player salaries, poor player performance and disloyalty to the team and fans affect the relationship between fans and their favorite teams. Brotman says these factors cause fans to feel mistreated and disenfranchised.

“It’s (player salaries) turning fans off. No one can identify with it,” said Brotman.

In addition, the literature shows fans are not the only ones feeling the effects of rising player salaries. The literature shows that all professional sports also blame player salaries for their financial difficulties.

The NHL blames soaring player salaries for its record losses. In 2002, hockey teams paid 76 percent of their $1.93 billion annual budget on player salaries and benefits.

---


122 Timothy Maier, 35

NHL commissioner Gary Bettman says, “Over the last five years in a row, we’ve had record attendance, an unprecedented amount of exposure and growth in revenues from $400 million to over $2 billion. But no matter how quickly revenues have grown, salaries have grown faster.”\(^{124}\)

The literature also shows that some in professional sports claim that big salaries bring better players to teams and therefore increase the chance of a team’s success. However, some team owners disagree. Buffalo Sabres owner B. Thomas Golisano adds, “There is little correlation in the NHL between success and the size of a team’s payroll.”\(^{125}\)

Anaheim Mighty Ducks senior vice president of operations Al Coates disagrees. “Our fans in this market care about marquee players…this area thrives on star syndrome,” said Coates following completion of a $40 million deal to sign a star player.\(^{126}\)

Sports psychologist Richard Lustberg adds that high player salaries are just a part of the capitalistic side of professional sports in America today, and the complaints connected to the salaries are unfounded. Lustberg says,

“I am tired of hearing people complain about how much professional athletes make. It is constant and ill founded. Ill founded in the sense that we live in a capitalist society where a free market economy exists. I am tired of hearing that based upon how much an athlete earns makes him that much more responsible to the recipient of the goods or services he supplies. In this case, the fan. Those who think this is the case are very confused.”\(^{127}\)


\(^{126}\) Darren Rovell, Sept. 3 2003

\(^{127}\) Richard Lustberg, 18 April 2001, 1 Jan. 2004
Maier argues that player salaries teach children that money is most important. Maier says, “It’s (player salaries) certainly teaching kids what adults value.” Maier said that a 10-year-old boy asked him how much President Clinton makes after a baseball player signed a $252 million contract. When the boy heard $200,000 he asked, “Doesn’t the president have an important job?” To which Maier replied, “Yes, but he can’t draw tens of thousands of fans.” “Oh,” said the boy. In addition, according to the literature sports fans have begun to show their disillusionment in their favorite players because of rising salaries. Rangers’ relief pitcher and player representative Jeff Zimmerman said following a possible player strike, “Fans were showing their disapproval, but, more importantly, they were showing their apathy, that they could care less if there was baseball.” In Kansas City, fans laid dollar bills on top of the dugout and in Anaheim, fans threw foul balls back onto the field.

In addition to rising player salaries, player indiscretions also affect the relationship between players and fans. The literature shows that the court of public opinion can often judge players more harshly than the court of law and without considering the facts of an athlete’s case.

In 2003, Los Angeles Lakers star Kobe Bryant was charged with felony sexual assault. Many public relations practitioners agree that Bryant did not receive the PR counseling necessary to win in the court of public opinion. Michael Paul, president of MGP & Associates PR said, “If every aspect of this case is not handled properly, Kobe can be

---

128 Timothy Maier, 35
129 Timothy Maier, 35
130 Jeff Caplan, 1 Sept. 2002
exonerated of the criminal charges and still be ruined for life." Chip Tuttle of the PR firm, Conover Tuttle, said, "In today's media environment, you have websites thrown up for the sole purpose of reporting rumors and concocting theories about them." Dean Bender of the PR firm, Bender/Helper Impact, adds, "You have to control these things carefully or they're not going to work."

Those not in the public relations field disagree. Defense attorney Bill Moffitt says, "There's really no separation in a case like this where there's a tremendous amount of public knowledge of an accused before the case starts, and a lot of public interest."

Public relations practitioners say that in cases where an athlete faces public outcry, the best thing to do is remain out of the public eye. Defense attorney John Burris says, "It's better for the star to take a low profile during the period. They don't have to retire, but at the same time, they should reduce their stature to the point where they appear to be leading an ordinary existence."

PR professionals agree that a similar approach should have been taken when former Buffalo Bill running back, O.J. Simpson was charged with murder in 1995. Adam Shell, editor of Public Relations Tactics said that Simpson failed "to keep a low profile and don't say or do anything the public could misconstrue as being insensitive or boastful."

Cynthia Hennig, PR director for ICE, Inc. adds it is best for troubled athletes to, "retreat

---

132 Crawford, Oct. 2003
133 Crawford, Oct. 2003
135 Dan Harris, 7 Aug. 2003
for a time, say little, speak humbly and become a nice guy. Public service would be a good start.  

**Hockey Fans and Fighting**

Several recent incidents of player violence in the NHL have led some critics of fighting, a long-time hockey mainstay, to question its place in the modern sport. Others blame hockey violence for the sport’s financial troubles and say that if the NHL does not amend its rules on fighting soon, any possibility of building a future-fan base will be lost.

On March 8, 2004, Vancouver Canuck’s forward Todd Bertuzzi struck Colorado Avalanche rookie Steve Moore in the back of the head in retaliation for Moore’s hit on a Canuck’s player during the teams’ previous game on February 16. Moore suffered severe facial lacerations, a concussion and a broken neck. In response, the NHL fined Bertuzzi over a half million dollars and suspended him for the rest of the season and playoffs. In 2000, Boston Bruins defensemen Marty McSorley was suspended for a year and subsequently has not returned to the NHL for slashing Canucks forward Donald Brashear in the head with his stick. The American College of Sports Medicine’s president commented, “It’s time to stop these muggings masquerading as a sport.” However, not everyone agrees.

Jason Kay, editor of The Hockey News, says the media stigmatize the sport because they do not understand the sport or its fans. Says Kay,

> “...the NHL generated nearly $2 billion in revenue last season. Shouldn’t that be enough money to sustain the industry? Does the NHL really need validation from daytime talk show hosts or disinterested sportswriters

---

137 PR Watch, Vol. 3, No. 4, 1996
or anyone else who just doesn’t get it? Shut up. Go away. We don’t need your kind around here.”

In addition, according to a March 16, 2004 Hockey News fan poll, just 3 percent of fans said they “dislike” hockey fights. However, Sports Illustrated writer Michael Farber contends that even though the majority of hockey fans enjoy fighting and may be upset now if the practice were banned, the NHL would benefit in the long term from eliminating the practice. Farber writes,

“The NHL risks offending lifelong fans, but would those fans really turn their backs on the sport they love? And how does that risk compare with the risk of failing to attract new fans. With attendance down for the second straight year, the most appropriate question for the NHL to ask itself about the possible elimination of fighting is, What have we got to lose?”

Farber notes that the 2004 All-Star Game garnered lower ratings than the Arena Football League. In addition, ESPN’s ratings for hockey have dropped from 1.2 in 1994-95 to 0.5 in 2003-04. George Bodenheimer, president of ABC Sports and ESPN said, “...from a ratings perspective, the sports has underperformed.” The NHL’s television contract with ABC and ESPN expires in 2004.

Others agree, saying that the NHL’s acceptance of fighting keeps its popularity down compared to America’s other three major sports, football, baseball and basketball. Hockey authors Jeff Klein and Karl Eric-Reif write,

“Why does the National Hockey League allow fighting in its games? Why, when people

140 Farber, 60
141 Farber, 60
142 Farber, 60

48
make fun of the NHL and of hockey because of all the fighting in it, does the league let the fighting continue? Why does it permit its linesmen to stand back and *let 'em go*, then send these players off the ice for all of five minutes and wink knowingly when they step back on and do it all over again? The NHL has been fighting an uphill battle for some 30 years to be recognized in the United States as a full-fledged major league, a league whose goal it is to make money for its member teams. Yet it perpetuates exactly the one thing that most Americans say is ridiculous about hockey: Fighting.”

**Fan Relations Efforts**

The literature shows that due to the economic troubles U.S. professional sports are currently experiencing, some teams have had to find new ways to attract and maintain fan interest. Minor league hockey teams like the Rochester Americans and Syracuse Crunch offer fans innovative services. Both teams recently introduced In-Seat Services, a way for fans to order and pay for food, beverages and merchandise from their cell phones and have it delivered to them in their seats. Crunch Corporate Financial Officer, Vance Lederman said the service “allows our fans a ‘slap shot’ route to get food and beverages delivered right to their seats without missing any of the action on the ice.”

In addition, the literature shows that teams are also increasingly relying on merchandising to further their fan relations efforts as far as marketing the team is concerned. Progressive Grocer writer Kevin Coupe says that team merchandising is analogous to supermarkets.

---

"You can do everything right—pick the right location, hire the right people, stock the right products, establish the right prices—but if you don’t market your image aggressively and establish a crucial link with your community, you may find yourself out of the retailing pennant race." 

Some public relations professionals say that American teams should expand their markets globally to increase the impact of their fan relations effort. Charles Brotman, a sports public relations professional who marketed the Washington Senators in the 1950s, says attracting international fans may increase interest of professional sports.

Washington Post writer William Gildea agrees writing, "Different pro sports try to appeal to the world only to increase revenues."

ESPN writer Peter Keating writes on the current state of fan relations,

"...all that cash you flow into game tickets is just a down payment. Parking and hot pretzels, jerseys and cable TV—they make up only a partial list of the pieces you pay to be a sports fan. Your emotions, too: all those hopes you pour into save opportunities, fast breaks, draft lists, interior lineman and anterior cruciate ligaments. ...you happily invest in your teams, expecting that the love you give will be equal to the love you take."

Team Management Factors Affecting Fan Relations

The review of literature shows that soaring player salaries and high ticket prices affect the success of fan relations efforts. In addition, the literature shows a team’s

---

146 Timothy Maier, 34
<http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/print?id=1495740&type=story>
management also plays an important part in influencing fans’ attitudes towards their favorite teams.

Oftentimes, financial issues arise between team management and their fans that can affect how fans feel about the team. Many times, team owners attribute such financial issues the high player salaries. At the same time, owners are trying to find ways to combat fan hostility while maintaining player loyalty.

In addition, the literature shows that fans’ desires are changing and teams are struggling to keep up. NFL commissioner Paul Tagliabue said, “Our fans in the 21st Century are very different from our fans in the 20th Century. Their habits are different, their attitudes are different, and the ways we need to connect with them are different.”

Some teams have initiated new fan-friendly proposals to stem the tide of fan mistrust and resentment. However, the literature shows that the business side of sports often inhibits how greatly such fan relations efforts can pacify fans. Therefore, the researcher will illustrate how the profit-making aspects of professional sports can impair relations between team management and fans.

NHL commissioner Gary Bettman said the owners and managers of teams must allow all those involved in professional sports to get what they want most from sports. “Certainly, the players should be paid fairly, the fans should be able to afford a reasonably priced ticket, and the owners should have the opportunity to operate their business without constantly having to infuse additional funds,” said Bettman. Seattle Supersonics owner Howard Schultz adds, “If we lose our relationships with the core

---

149 Eric Fisher, 30
consumer and overly focus on economic models, we’ll turn ourselves upside down. We have to remember that success in pro sports is not an entitlement.”

However, some team owners say they must raise ticket prices to make profits because rising player salaries financially drain them. Marc Ganis, sports analyst and president of SportsCorp. Ltd. adds, “The problems with many teams out there is that there is no connection between salaries and revenues and teams are losing 15 to 20 percent of their asset value in operating losses each year. If you do that for more than a couple years, you have to file for bankruptcy.”

However, some blame team management for financial difficulties. CNN/Money writer Chris Isidore says, “If running a sports team was the money loser claimed by most owners, the line of sports teams at bankruptcy courts would be longer than the line at any stadium’s beer vendor.” Bob Goodenow, executive director for the NHLPA says the circumstances leading to club bankruptcies are a result of the business decisions and personal actions of team owners.

Team owners deny such allegations, noting the difficulty in satisfying fans while keeping high-priced players on the team. Pittsburgh Penguins player and owner, Mario Lemieux said he needs support by both fans and players if his team expects to succeed both on the ice and financially. “I can’t do this alone. I need the support of the corporate community and the fans, and if it’s not there, I’ve got to protect my interests,” said Lemieux.

---

151 Eric Fisher, 31
152 Darren Rovell, 13 Jan. 2003
154 Darren Rovell, 13 Jan. 2003
Some team managers, like former Philadelphia 76ers president Pat Croce, add that team management understands what their fans go through emotionally. "The only thing I did not enjoy was losing," said Croce. "The experience was painful! Each "L" generated nausea, followed by a night of restless sleep. I took each defeat personally because I believed I was letting down our great Philly fans," he said.\(^{156}\)

Noting the importance of fan revenues, some teams are beginning to initiate unique programs geared at offering fans better amenities and greater access to the team. In addition to lowering season-ticket prices by 8 percent, Sabres owner Bill Grolisano unveiled a new entry-level ticket plan starting at $10. Grolisano adds, "We think it's paramount and important to this community that we make this experience as affordable as we can."\(^{157}\) In addition, Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban personally answers every letter and email from fans.\(^{158}\)

Maier notes that today's increased emphasis on finances forces teams to become more open to fans. "The future of sports already is before our eyes: 'Joe fan' has evolved into 'Joe the corporate fan.' Pick up any sports page and it reads like a business report with stories of contracts, salary caps and revenue-sharing."\(^{159}\)

The Los Angeles Kings have taken note of the phenomenon and have begun to allow fans to review their books. Money manager and season ticket holder, Philip Propper said the access is part of a movement of sports teams coming clean with fans.\(^{160}\) Propper adds, "You cannot ask for fans to invest their emotions and their cash without keeping

---


\(^{157}\) Associated Press, 23 April 2003

\(^{158}\) Eric Fisher, 31

\(^{159}\) Timothy Maier, 32

them in the loop as to what’s happening with the team.” Tim Leiweke, president of Anschultz Entertainment, which owns the Kings, said, “I thought it was a unique way of being accountable.” NFL spokesman Greg Aiello adds that teams must be open their fans and accept the current trend of including fans in managerial decisions. “The broader message is that the success of an NFL franchise in today’s environment requires a comprehensive public and private partnership,” said Aiello. ESPN commentator Peter Gammons adds,

“Owners must realize that what is important is (1) the public—the fans—and their relationship with the players and (2) the owners’ and players’ responsibility to their fans and communities.”

Media Factors Affecting Fan Relations

The literature shows that sports media can also affect fan attitudes. In addition, the literature also illustrates that sports media is foundering financially, forcing sports journalists to cover the sports industry in new ways. Oftentimes, the story no longer deals with the events on the field, but rather off-field controversies. The literature shows the media’s increasingly pervasive coverage provides fans with a pejorative outlook on sports, which can increase fan cynicism thereby affecting the efforts of fan relations.

Former baseball player and current ESPN analyst, Harold Reynolds says, “It’s gotten so that regular news and normal stuff isn’t enough. Everything has got to be like ‘Hard Copy.’ The questions used to be, ‘How did you hit that slider?’ Now it’s, ‘What were

---

161 Associated Press, 10 March 2003
163 Peter Gammons, 31 Aug. 2002
you doing the night before you hit that slider?" George Vecsey, sports columnist for The New York Times adds, "We’re writing for the fans now, which is good and fair. But it’s more: Did the team win? And if they didn’t, whose fault was it? The broader perspective is not there anymore."

Some sports journalists say the widening split between athletes and reporters also contributes to the content of today’s sports pages. Journalist Michael Sokolove says,

“The outsized salaries, a relatively new phenomenon, have changed the journalist-athlete relationship in a significant way. Sportswriter and ballplayer no longer frequent the same spots. They don’t share meals and cabs on the road. They are no longer in economic circumstances similar enough to at least have some chance of understanding each others’ lives.”

In addition, the literature shows that sports journalists’ home team coverage can be biased due to conflicting interests. Paul Chapman, sports editor for the Vancouver Province says that outside influences can cause sports writers to stray from their journalistic responsibilities. “There is a danger that sports writers end up writing for the team, the players, the coaches, the management, etc., rather than their readers, who ultimately are our customers and pay our salaries.”

Moreover, the literature shows sports journalists may be influenced by allegiances to teams their readers cheer for. Journalist Mario Canseco of the University of British Columbia Journalism Review says that localism can affect journalists’ views of home teams. “Localism is a frequent source of conflict for sports journalists, who, in the

165 Michael Sokolove, 25
166 Michael Sokolove, 20
process of reporting on local teams, may be tempted to look the other way on
controversies involving their own players and executives."\textsuperscript{168}

Furthermore, the literature shows conflicts arise when sports journalists cover teams
owned by the companies that also own their television station or newspaper. For
example, in June 2000, commentators employed by Ted Turner's cable network, The
Superstation, were covering the Atlanta Braves, owned by Turner. In addition, the team
was also playing at Turner Field. The commentators noticed the catcher's box was five
inches shorter, providing Braves pitchers with a larger strike zone at all their home
games. Managers of opposing teams had complained to the baseball's commissioner for
years about the extra-wide strike zone at Turner Field; the home field for one of
baseball's pitching dynasties. No proof of tampering had ever been found until the
commentators, employed by Turner, made the discovery. Upon exposing the team's
enhanced catcher's box, the announcers were denied their usual seats aboard the team's
charter flight the following Monday and were forced to take a commercial flight. The
Braves were not fined.\textsuperscript{169}

Some sports fans say such scenarios are all too infrequent and that the sports media
needs to do a better job exposing improprieties in the sports industry. The League of
Fans write,

"Sports fans deserve to know the truth about
the industry they support. But unless fans
demand better coverage of the business of
sports, the media will continue to ignore their
public responsibility and use journalism to
make more money instead of to investigate
and report the news."\textsuperscript{170}

\textsuperscript{168} Mario Canseco, April 2001
\textsuperscript{169} Mario Canseco, April 2001
\textsuperscript{170} League of Fans, 11 Nov. 2003
Philadelphia Sports Fans

Because this thesis includes delimitations due to the unique nature of Philadelphia sports fans, the researcher must show how Philadelphia sports fans differ from other U.S. sports fans. In their book, *The Great Philadelphia Fan Book*, authors Glen Macnow and Anthony L. Gargano summarize the nature of Philadelphia sports fans. They write,

“There is nothing quite like the Philadelphia sports fan. No town supports its home teams more, bad season after bad season; yet no one challenges our national reputation for surliness. No city hosts as impressive a championship parade (trust us if your memory doesn’t go back that far); yet no city derides its own players as mercilessly, even if they are future Hall of Famers.”171

Player Perspective on Philadelphia Fans

The literature shows that unlike most cities’ fans, Philadelphia fans boo their own players just as mercilessly as they do opposing players. Former Phillies catcher Bob Uecker said of Philadelphia fans, “You know what they do when the game’s rained out? They go to the airport and boo the landings.”172 New York Giants defensemen Michael Strahan adds, “Philadelphia is the only place where you pull up on the bus and you’ve got the grandfather, grandmother, the grandkids, the kids, everybody flicking you off. The other stadiums, they kind of wave at you and give you the thumbs-down. Here, they give you the middle finger.”173

When asked what advice he would give fellow out-of-town athletes upon their first visit to Philadelphia former Cowboys wide receiver Michael Irvin said, “I hope they’re

---

172 Glen Macnow & Anthony L. Gargano, 25
173 Glen Macnow & Anthony L. Gargano, 27
okay with Jesus, because he’s about to come as close to seeing his maker as you can get without passing away. The fans will bring the kitchen sink and all the silverware at him.”

Philadelphia fans’ reputations are not unique only to professional sports. Temple University basketball coach John Chaney calls Philadelphia fans, “the worst in the world.” Chaney tells players to play for their coaches, not the fans. “Don’t come here for these fans. Because I hate these fans. I’ve been here all my life and I hate them all,” said Chaney. Still, Chaney has become a Philadelphia sports institution and media favorite in his 20 years as Temple’s coach.

The Fans Themselves

Author and Philadelphia Eagles fan Gene Newman says that the Philadelphia sports environment contributes to the Philadelphia fan mentality. Newman writes,

“I grew up with civilized parents, who had very respectful friends and acquaintances. I was misled at an early age into believing that all adults were nice and benign. But at an Eagles game I once saw a grown man yell ‘F**** YOU’ at a seven-year-old wearing an opposing team’s jersey. I saw one Eagles fan make a blind-sided diving tackle on a New York Giants fan, who was standing on top of his chair cheering. When they collided, they toppled down three rows before continuing to fight on top of a sweet looking woman. I saw a group of men beat a security guard senseless, before ripping off his yellow security windbreaker and waving it over their heads in victory.”

174 Glen Macnow & Anthony L. Gargano, 27
175 Glen Macnow & Anthony L. Gargano, 25
Philadelphia Eagles owner Jeffrey Lurie adds that Philadelphia fans will, “pelt opposing players with snowballs and boo them when they are being carried off the field on a stretcher.”

When the new Eagles stadium neared completion, team officials considered banning outside foods into the stadium until the governor stepped in. Known as “Hoagiegate,” the ban led some Philadelphia fans to consider boycotting the team. One Eagles fan said, “They asked the taxpayers for money, they got it and then they shaft us.”

In addition to fan versus management stands Philadelphia fans make, the literature shows that Philadelphia’s perpetually good teams, which consistently make the playoffs but never win the championship, also contributes to the “Philly fan mentality.” For instance, the Flyers, which have been to seven Stanley Cup finals winning just two and the Eagles, which have appeared in the playoffs 15 times and have never won a Super Bowl affect fan mentality. The Phillies, which have been to the playoffs 11 times, winning one World Series out of five; and the 76ers, which have been in the playoffs a staggering 43 times, winning only three championships have also contributed to Philadelphia fan behavior.

Glen Macnow and Anthony L. Gargano write,

“...the part everyone around here knows by heart. It’s as predictable as sunset, devoid of the beauty, of course, unless you are one of us: a Philadelphia Sports Fan. Here, suffering is familiar and familiar is nice because familiar is comforting. We know the way home to disappointment,

---

displeasure, distress, disenchantment, discontentment and plain 'ol dissed, and all of that, by the way, is our shroud in sports life."^{179}

This mentality may have contributed to the event that many claim began the most notorious depiction of the Philadelphia sports fans.

On December 15, 1968, the Eagles were playing the Minnesota Vikings in a snowstorm, which had begun the night before. Fans arriving at Franklin Field found three inches of slush on their bleacher seats that had never been cleaned off. The Eagles record by that time was 2-11. The team’s management thought a halftime Christmas show would boost fans’ enjoyment of the game. The show included a float, which got stuck in the mud on the field, and of course Santa Claus. When Santa ran onto the field, he was met with boos. Frank Olivio, a South Philadelphia native played the role of Santa recalled the incident,

"That’s when the booing started,” says Olivio. At first, I was scared because it was so loud. But then I figured, hey, it was just good-natured teasing. I’m a Philadelphia fan, I knew what was what. I thought it was funny.”^{180}

At this time, fans began throwing hundreds of snowballs at Olivio. Future Pro-Bowler Matt Millen who was attended the game said, “That was the only fun part of the game, and everybody joined in—fathers, sons, even the old ladies. That guy had it coming. Hey, it was just the thing to do at the time. No big deal.” When asked if he would play the role of Santa next year, Olivio said, “No way. If it doesn’t snow, they’ll probably throw beer bottles.”^{181}

^{179} Glen Macnow & Anthony L. Gargano, 11
^{180} Glen Macnow & Anthony L. Gargano, 36
^{181} Glen Macnow & Anthony L. Gargano, 36
To this day, out-of-town sports media still mention the Santa incident when their teams come to Philadelphia.

"The Cardinals are off to Philadelphia, about to encounter fans who once threw snowballs at Santa Claus." -Dan Bickley, *Arizona Republic*, 2002

"Philadelphia sports fans are notoriously hard to please and irascible. Some are just plain crazy. This is, after all, where fans once booed and hurled snowballs at Santa Claus."


"They throw snowballs at Santa Claus in Philly... That’s why there’s a jail under the stands." -Elfin and Snider, *Washington Times*, 1999

The last comment refers to "Eagles Court," a courtroom that existed within Philadelphia’s Veterans Stadium to prosecute rowdy fans on the spot. The Eagles new stadium, Lincoln Financial Field, includes holding cells for unruly fans.182

Despite fan disappointment and notorious behavior, the literature shows Philadelphia fans strongly identify with their teams. Newman wrote following a surprise Eagles victory during an otherwise abysmal season,

"I can’t remember to last time I shouted my throat bloody and was that excited at a sporting event. It’s moments like that, no matter how fleeting, that I love being an Eagles fan. Even though the fans are insane, and the team sucks, they still make me feel like I belong. To what, I’m not exactly sure."183

Former Philadelphia mayor and current Pennsylvania governor Ed Rendell adds,

"You just can’t tell a fan not to feel passionately about something he lives for. People here (Philadelphia) look at the sports teams as part of their extended families. The


183 Gene Newman, 2 Nov. 2003
players aren’t there to entertain them, the players are part of their lives."\textsuperscript{184}
Chapter 3
Research Design

To test this thesis' hypotheses, the researcher employed both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Like Litrenta's 1999 thesis, the researcher conducted two content analyses of Philadelphia media outlets focusing on the 2003 Philadelphia Flyers hockey team. Analyses of Flyers' stories appearing in the Philadelphia Daily News newspaper throughout the entire season provided team analyses, player perspectives, coaching staff and Flyer's management comments and game summaries. The researcher used Daily News articles and 610-WIP recordings that focused the Flyers during the entire 2003-04 season.

Philadelphia’s AM sports-talk radio station, 610-WIP, provided both fan and host comments, opinions, beliefs and suggestions on the Flyers’ performance, talent and ability. The 30-minute radio recordings consist of listener call-in shows following a sampling of Flyers games. The researcher used Daily News articles and 610-WIP recordings during the regular hockey season only—the playoffs were not included in the content analyses.

To report the findings from the content analyses, the researcher used intercoder-reliability tests on a representative sample of the Daily News newspaper articles as well as the one-hour recordings of the 610-WIP radio programs. The tests compared the
responses of four individuals exposed to the newspaper articles and radio recordings to assure that the reported data from the content analyses were accurate. Because the researcher did not have the resources to hire coders to code all of the articles and recordings, a reliability sample was taken to determine the units and characteristics that were used for all the content analyses. The four test coders arrived at these units and characteristics following their exposure to the Daily News articles and 610-WIP recordings samples. The researcher was among the four test coders.

The Daily News articles and 610-WIP recordings each included separate coding characteristics. The units used to code the Daily News articles include: a) positive management comments, b) negative management comments, c) positive player comments and d) negative player comments. Additionally, the analysis also measured the column inches of articles.

A sample of 25 percent of the season’s post-game radio shows was used for the 610-WIP recordings content analysis (10 wins, eight losses and four tie games). The characteristics and units used for the 610-WIP recordings determined if the recording: a) favored the team, b) criticized the team or c) made suggestions to improve the team. Fans that called-in to express their opinions on the Flyers were coded separately from the radio show’s host. However, the characteristics and units used for the coding were the same for both the callers as well as the host. In addition, content analysis also measured the amount of airtime devoted to Flyers coverage as well as the amount of airtime devoted to non-Flyers discussion.

The units used for coding were derived from the coders’ reasoning for answering either a, b or c. For instance, if coders stated that an article criticized the team, they
would explain why they felt that way, i.e. the article said the team’s coach made bad
decisions. The researcher included a list of these explanations with the data in chapter
four. The researcher then used these explanations as a basis to complete the intercoder-
reliability tests on all of the Daily News newspaper articles as well as the 610 WIP
recordings used in the content analyses.

In addition to the content analyses, the researcher used qualitative research in the form
of intercept studies as well as interviews with both a Flyers’ public relations practitioner
and Philadelphia sports journalist. The researcher conducted 100 intercept studies of
Flyers’ fans following the 2003-04 hockey season (see Figure 1). The researcher
questioned fans attending the Flyers practice sessions after both losing and winning
games during the regular season. The researcher questioned ten fans during each visit.
The intercept studies were segmented into winning games, games in which the Flyers
won the previous game; losing games, games in which the Flyers lost the previous game
and tie games, games in which the Flyers tied the previous game. The researcher
attended practice sessions following four winning games, four losing games and two tie
games. Participants were selected at random.

To gauge the effects a winning season has on fan satisfaction, the study asked the
intercept study respondents to compare the performance of this season’s Flyers team with
last year’s team through quantitative questions. In arriving at these questions, the
researcher pre-tested the intercept-study instrument with a proportionate sample (10
percent) of respondents. The Flyers record in 2002-03 was 45-20-13-4 with 107 points,
however the team’s season ended with a loss in second round of the playoffs.

This study’s primary comparative analysis came from comparing data regarding fan
attitude following wins and losses. For instance, did the attitudes of fans toward the team decline following a loss or did fans support the team regardless of team performance as the literature suggests? Moreover, the content analyses were compared against each other to determine if media coverage was lower in the first half (during the football season) and higher in the second half (closer to the Stanley Cup playoffs).

In addition, the researcher compared the amount and the quality of media coverage for the Flyers after both losing games and winning games to determine if the media provided more coverage to the team when it won than when it lost, as the literature suggests. For the 610-WIP analysis, the researcher compared the amount of coverage on the Flyers versus other sports as well as other topics as determined by the host, i.e. weather, politics, etc. The researcher compared this data between both halves of the season to determine if Flyers coverage increased as the season progressed and/or if fan interest increased, i.e. more call-ins by Flyers fans, etc.

The researcher also conducted interviews with Philadelphia Flyers’ Senior Director of Communication, Zack Hill (see Figure 2). This interview provided information on public relations techniques used by the team and general insights into the workings of professional sports team public relations. The researcher also conducted an interview with Edward Moran, a member of the Philadelphia sports media (see Figure 3). Moran is the Daily News’s Flyers beat reporter and writer of the articles used in this study’s content analysis. This interview provided insights into the media’s attitudes on sports teams, its players and management as well as reasons for the media’s treatment of the team as far as what the media reports and why.
Several study design restrictions were included in this study. Because both the qualitative and quantitative research techniques depend on the time in which they are implemented, they fail to represent either past or future conditions. Sports relations practitioners can only form general guidelines based on the gathered data to aid in solving similar problems in the future. However, they cannot assume that the same outcomes presented here will prevail when they face comparable problems.
Chapter Four

Results

The researcher obtained the following data through intercept studies conducted at the Philadelphia Flyers practice facility in Voorhees, N.J., from February 1 to March 31, 2004. The researcher randomly chose 100 respondents that indicated they were Flyers fans. Ten respondents were questioned after four winning games, four losing games and two tie games. This study's primary comparative analysis came from comparing data regarding fan attitudes following wins and losses.

Philadelphia Flyers 2003-04 Record: 40 wins, 21 losses, 15 ties, 6 overtime losses
First Place in Atlantic Division
Third Place in Eastern Conference

Question 3: How do you rate your loyalty to the team?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Diehard</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Casual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 4: Do you identify with this season's Flyers team more than last year's team?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 5: Would you show less support for the Flyers if they were currently in last place?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 6: Would you follow the Flyers more closely if the hockey season was shortened from its current 82-game season?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 7: In what areas could the Flyers make improvements to increase the likelihood of you following the team?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(A) Reduce the Costs of Attending a Game

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>66%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(B) Have more fan-oriented activities/promotions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(C) Increase media coverage of the team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 8: In EACH block, please rank which items you would most like to see happen.

Block A: Costs

Lower ticket prices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>81%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lower parking prices at the Wachovia Center

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lower concession prices at the Wachovia Center

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Block B: Fan Relations**

**Provide greater player accessibility**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>57%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Provide greater management accessibility**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sponsor more giveaways and contests**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Block C: Media Relations**

**Have more player appearances on radio and TV talk shows**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Have a Flyers-only weekly TV or radio show**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>46%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Provide more Flyers coverage on local TV news/newspaper**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Fan Intercept Studies:**  
**Data Set I (Wins & Losses)**  

*Question 3: How do you rate your loyalty to the team?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Diehard</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Casual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>73 %</td>
<td>22 %</td>
<td>5 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation**  

*Question 3: The majority of fans might identify themselves as “diehards” due to the researcher conducting the intercept studies in the Flyers practice arena. The facility attracts fans that are deeply attached to the team and seek additional contact with it, which might explain why most respondents there considered themselves “diehard” fans.*

In addition, respondents might define themselves as “diehards” to attach themselves to the Flyers and the team’s success during this season. The literature shows that the level of satisfaction fans experience directly influences their commitment to their favorite team. Therefore, this season’s Flyers fans might define themselves as “diehards” because of the team’s success whereas, if the team had performed poorly, more fans might identify themselves as “average” or “casual” to disassociate themselves from the team’s poor performance.
Question 4: Do you identify with this season’s Flyers team more than last year’s team?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>86 %</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interpretation

The literature shows that commitment fans have in their roles as team supporters influences the level of identification they have with their favorite team. Accordingly, 86 percent of this season’s Flyers fans identify more with this season’s team than last year’s team because they feel their role as team supporter is greater this year.

Flyers fans that said they identify more with this season’s team might also be experiencing BIRGing and CORFing tendencies. Fans might say they identify more with this season’s team to cut off their ties to last year’s team and its loss in the second round of the playoffs. Moreover, fans might be attempting to associate themselves with the glory of the team’s success this season as well as reinforce their high expectations for team’s performance in the second half of the season.

In addition, the literature shows that fans with the highest levels of identification with their team often overestimate their team’s ability in the future. Therefore, because the Flyers performed so well in the first half of the season, Flyers fans might expect the team to perform equally as well in the second half, which in turn strengthens their identification with the team. This sense of heightened expectation might explain why 86 percent of Flyers fans report they identify more with this season’s team than last season’s team.
Question 5: Would you show less support for the Flyers if they were currently in last place?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

According to the literature, the level of identification fans have with their favorite team dictates the level of satisfaction they derive from roles as team supporters. Accordingly, Flyers fans might feel that their attachment to the team is so great that they would continue to support the team regardless of how the team performed. In contrast to Cialdini’s “BIRGing” and “CORFing” tendencies, which state that fans separate themselves from losing teams to remove themselves from the team’s failures, respondents in this study clearly indicated that team performance would not affect their allegiance to the team. While it might be possible that the Flyers’ success this season influenced respondents’ answers, the fact that such a majority of respondents indicated that team performance did not matter to them illustrates that a losing season does not affect fan support. In addition, because the majority of respondents in this study categorize themselves as “diehards,” they might remain unaffected by team performance and therefore support the team during losing seasons, whereas casual fans might not.

In addition, the data confirm Levarie’s hypothesis that most fans will attend sporting events and remain loyal to teams even when they suffer losing seasons.

Results from this single question help to confirm this study’s second hypothesis. Because the data indicate that team performance does not affect fan allegiance, team performance should therefore not restrict or influence the efforts of sports team’s public relations practitioners, making their efforts just as effective during winning seasons as
they are during losing seasons. Therefore, sports team’s public relations practitioners should be able to positively affect fan attitude even during losing seasons.

**Question 6:** Would you follow the Flyers more closely if the hockey season were shortened from its current 82-game season?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

Because question three indicated that most respondents classified themselves as “diehard fans,” they might be less likely to embrace the idea of shortening the hockey season. That is, in addition to adamantly supporting the team, “diehard fans” might also be adamant about preserving the traditions of the sport. Therefore, these fans might feel that any changes to the game would be as damaging in their relationship with the sport as any changes to the Flyers lineup would be to their relationship with the team.

**Question 7:** In what areas could the Flyers make improvements to increase the likelihood of you following the team?

(A) Reduce the costs of attending a game

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>66%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

In contrast to ESPN’s 2003 Ultimate Standings study, which found affordability to be the fourth most important issue for fans, respondents in this study overwhelmingly rate cost as the issue they would most like to see changed. However, this study does substantiate ESPN’s findings concerning the Philadelphia Flyers affordability. In 2003,
the Ultimate Standings ranked the Flyers 113th out of 121 professional sports teams in the category of affordability and 102nd in 2004. Flyers fans pay the second highest ticket price in the NHL ($57.06 average) and the highest prices for concessions ($5.50 for 12oz. beer).

(B) Have more fan-oriented activities/promotions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

While most respondents feel that the number of fan activities/promotions are somewhat important, they do not feel they are important enough to sway their decision to follow the team more intently. ESPN’s Ultimate Standings also show that “stadium experience,” or the team’s promotions and game-day giveaways, are neither the least important issue facing fans nor are they the most important. To this effect, the literature shows that some teams are abandoning old promotional standbys like baseball cap giveaways for more innovative services such as in-seat food deliveries for fans that order using cell phones.

(C) Increase media coverage of the team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

The review of the literature shows that the content of today’s sports media has shifted from covering just the facts of the game to dwelling on athletes’ off-field controversies. In addition, the literature illustrates the media’s pejorative impression of sports causes fans to become cynical towards their favorite teams and players.
In addition to fan activities and promotions, respondents in this study indicate that media coverage is the least important of all the factors affecting their allegiance to the Flyers. These findings might indicate that because of the media’s seemingly insatiable appetite for the most notorious aspects of sports, most fans have come to realize that media’s messages dwell predominately on the worst of sports. Therefore, today’s sports fans might feel that the sports media are too preoccupied with sensationalism rather than responsible journalism, leading fans to scrutinize the media’s content with increasing skepticism.

Question 8: In EACH block, please rank which items you would most like to see happen.

**Block A: Costs**

**Lower ticket prices**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>81%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

Like the preceding findings on overall affordability, Flyers fans agreed that ticket prices are too expensive. This study’s finding again substantiate ESPN’s earlier findings on the issue. Moreover, in ESPN’s study, Flyers fans rate the category “Bang for the Buck,” which encompasses how efficiently teams produced victories from funding received from fans, as most important. Even though the Flyers have produced numerous winning seasons in the past, 28 to date with two Stanley Cup Championships, seven appearance in the finals and 12 appearances in the conference finals, fans might feel the team does not effectively use the money they spend on tickets to ensure future success. Additionally, fans might feel as though the team’s management mishandles the funding
from their tickets, (second most expensive in the NHL) and that management does not invest in resources that create championship teams, i.e. good players, coaches, etc.

**Lower parking prices at the Wachovia Center**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

While fans clearly indicate their dislike for the high price of Flyers tickets, less are concerned with costs of parking at the Wachovia Center. The costs of parking at the Wachovia center (average $10) coupled with the cost of a ticket brings to the total average cost of attending a 2003/04 regular season Flyers game to $67.06. The added expense of parking at a Flyers game might be tolerable to fans, but because 58 percent of respondents note that it is “somewhat important,” it might still influence fans’ decision to attend a team.

**Lower concession prices at the Wachovia Center**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

Despite the fact that the Wachovia Center offers the most expensive concessions of all major U.S. sports arenas, Flyers fans do not consider this fact influential enough to affect the likelihood of them following the team. In relation to the set costs of attending a Flyers game, i.e. tickets and parking, fans might feel concession prices do not affect their
enjoyment in seeing the Flyers at the Wachovia Center because it is not a required expense.

**Block B: Fan Relations**

**Provide greater player accessibility**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>57%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

Of all fan relations issues, respondents indicate that a lack of player accessibility most affects their relationship with the team. Fans might feel as though the boundaries separating themselves from the athletes they cheer for are too great and therefore might feel as though the team does not value its relationship with them.

**Provide greater management accessibility**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

While fans perceive that the separation between themselves and players is too great, they also indicate that the team’s management is also too unapproachable. Fans perhaps feel despondent because of their impression that the team’s management isolates itself from them and does not value fan input.
**Sponsor more giveaways and contests**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

Of all fan relations activities, the sports public relations mainstay of contests and giveaways seem to least affect fan loyalty. In relation to the issue of team accessibility, fans indicate that they are disinterested in this brand of team promotion suggesting that bobble-head giveaways and team merchandise contests do not influence fan interest in the team. Perhaps fans realize the odds of them winning these contests are too great or perhaps the giveaways have become too banal to affect their interest in the team.

---

**Block C: Media Coverage**

**Have more player appearances on radio and TV talk shows**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

Fans’ disinterest in seeing their favorite Flyers on TV talk shows or listening to them on the radio equal their indifference to the idea of increasing the team’s news media coverage. Again, because most respondents in this study deem themselves as “diehard fans,” they might feel that such publicity is beneath their hallowed athletes. In addition, according to the literature, the Philadelphia fan mentality might prevent Flyers fans from being excited about seeing their favorite players on TV talk shows due to their strong feelings of “ownership” with the team. According to the literature, Philadelphia sports fans do not view their favorite players as entertainers, but as family members.
**Have a Flyers-only weekly TV or radio show**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>46%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

Despite respondents’ disinterest in having their favorite Flyers appear on TV or radio talk shows, they are enthusiastic about the idea of a Flyers-only weekly TV or radio show. Fans might embrace this idea because they feel that such a show would be more informative than merely entertaining. In addition, such a show might address fans’ concerns over the issue of player inaccessibility. Seeing the Flyers interact with each other and/or the show’s host might give fans the impression of closeness with the players.

**Provide more Flyers coverage on local TV news/local newspaper**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

As with part (c) of question seven, fans indicated that they are not interested in more news media coverage of the team. Again, because the literature indicates that today’s sports news media increasingly focuses on the most scandalous aspects of professional sports, respondents might be becoming disinterested in this style of reporting and therefore less concerned with increasing media coverage.
Fan Intercept Studies
Data Set II (Wins Only)

Question 3: How do you rate your loyalty to the team?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diehard</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Casual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interpretation:

As anticipated, team loyalty remained strong among respondents after winning games. While question three of Data Set I indicate that team performance does not affect fan allegiance, the fact that the Flyers won might have helped to reinforce fans’ connection to the team and in turn their loyalty to it.

Question 4: Do you identify with this season’s Flyers team more than last year’s team?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>84%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interpretation:

Like the previous question, respondents show that team success bolstered their support for the Flyers. The results from this data support Cialdini’s “BIRGing” theory. Flyers fans might have been “Basking In the Reflected Glory” of the team’s win and therefore their identification was magnified inasmuch as they want to attach themselves to the team’s success.
Question 5: Would you show less support for the Flyers if they were currently in last place?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interpretation:

Respondents’ support for the team might have been influenced by the fact that the Flyers were dominating their opponents in the standings when this question was asked. The team was successful against its divisional rival, The New Jersey Devils, and held a commanding lead in its division standings. Even though respondents indicate they would support the Flyers if they were in last place, the great success of the team might have made it difficult for fans to answer such a hypothetical question.

Question 6: Would you follow the Flyers more closely if the hockey season were shortened from its current 82-game season?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interpretation:

As with data set one, respondents indicate they would not like to see the hockey season shortened. The fact that the team had just won might have given fans more reason to indicate that they want the hockey season to remain at 82 games. For instance, the team’s recent win compounded with its success this season might have caused fans to want the season to remain unchanged so they could experience the feelings of joy that accompany wins and winning seasons more often. That is, if the season were shortened, fans of winning teams would have fewer opportunities to experience the “BIRGing” tendency because there would be fewer games for the team to win.
Question 7: In what areas could the Flyers make improvements to increase the likelihood of you following the team?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduce the cost of attending a game</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have more fan-oriented activities/promotions</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase media coverage of the team</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

Regardless of the recent win, fans responded that the cost of attending a Flyers game is too high. However, in contrast to data set one, twice as many respondents indicate that the issue of cost is the least important area that needs improvement (8 percent of fans in Data Set I said that the costs of attending a game were too high). Fans might be pacified by the recent win, indicating that they are more likely to pay the price of attending a Flyers game if the team won.

More fans indicate that fan-oriented activities and promotions are somewhat following winning games than did respondents in Data Set I, (52 percent to 41 percent). This might be because fans do not see such promotions as attempts to distract them and therefore do not feel antagonized by these efforts following winning games.

As with Data Set I, fans respond that media coverage is least important of all issues facing them following winning games (both at 44 percent). Because fans are still on a “high” following the win, they might be less interested in what media says—all fans might be interested in is the fact that the team won.
Question 8: In each block, please rank which items you would most like to see happen.

BLOCK A: COSTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower ticket prices</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower parking prices at the Wachovia Center</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower concession prices at the Wachovia Center</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interpretation:

The issue of ticket price remains the highest ranked item in importance to fans following winning games. This issue drops only one percentage point from Data Set I. However, it increases six percentage points among fans that deem the issue “least important” and five percentage points among fans that deemed the issue “somewhat important.” Because these fans respond following winning games, they might be more tolerant of paying high ticket prices because they are still experiencing the “BIRG” tendency—they are willing to pay to see their team if it wins.

Like ticket prices from data set one, the issue of parking prices also drops very little, (58 percent to 56 percent). However, it did increase four percent in the “least important” category. Again, this might be attributed to the fact that fans are willing to pay the required costs of see their team win whereas they are not concerned with unnecessary costs like concessions. Because fans have the choice to purchase concessions, they might feel that this issue do not concern them.
### BLOCK B: FAN RELATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide greater player accessibility</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide greater management accessibility</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsor more giveaways and contests</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Interpretation:

Among fans that following winning games, the issue of player accessibility is five percent lower than Data Set I. In addition, it is seven percent higher in the category of “somewhat important.” Given that the team just won, fans might care less about having access to their favorite players as long as they continue to succeed on the ice.

Most notably, responses regarding management accessibility increased ten points in the “least important” category among fans after winning games. Like player accessibility, management accessibility might not be important to fans as long as the team wins.

The issue of giveaways and contests increases eight percentage points in the “most important” category from data set one to data set two following winning games. Fans might feel as though they are not being intentionally distracted by such promotional methods. That is, fans might feel that the giveaways and contests are purely for the fans’ enjoyment and not intended as a diversionary tactic employed by the team to distract fans from its poor performance.
**Interpretation:**

Player appearances on radio and TV talk shows increases seven percent in the “somewhat important” category over data set one. This could be due to fans’ desire to hear their favorite players talk about their winning season, which in turn might reinforce fans’ identification with their favorite players’ and their success—the “BIRG” tendency.

As with data set one, the issue of a Flyers-only weekly TV or radio show remains the most desired change among fans after winning games. Similar to having more player appearances on radio and TV talk shows, fans with access to a weekly Flyers show could relive the team’s wins of the past week and reestablish their connection with the team’s successes.

Providing more coverage of the Flyers on local TV news and in the local newspapers became the least important change for fans after winning games, (giveaways and contests were the least important in data set one at 58 percent). Clearly, fans see a separation from the potential Flyers-only show and the news media. Whereas the news media provides snippets of information and, according to the literature oftentimes sensationalist coverage, respondents might feel that the Flyers-only show would provide greater
detailed reports on the team. In addition, the Flyers-only show might enable fans to know their favorite players better, thereby increasing their accessibility and bonds with them.
**Fan Intercept Studies**  
**Data Set III (Losses Only)**

*Question 3: How do you rate your loyalty to the team?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diehard</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Casual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>76%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

Interestingly, more respondents identify themselves as “diehard fans” after losing games than after winning games (six percent increase). The fact that the team suffered a recent loss seemed to only help reinforce fans’ level of support. However, as with data set two, the fact that the Flyers experienced great success during the season might have influenced respondents.

Moreover, respondents might have realized that one loss would not affect the Flyers commanding lead in the Eastern Division standings. In addition, fans might have felt that by supporting the team after a loss, they were showing that their allegiance to the Flyers is unaffected by team performance thereby strengthening their relationship with the team—showing that they are not “fair-weather” fans).

*Question 4: Do you identify with this season’s Flyers team more than last year’s team?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>88%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

Like with the previous question, a greater number of respondents state they identified with the team more this year following losing games than winning games (88 percent to 84 percent). Additionally, the results from this question disagree with Cialdini’s “CORFing” tendency theory, which states the fans will disassociate themselves from the
team following poor performance. However, like the previous question, the fact that the Flyers lost one game in relation to their otherwise successful season might not have been influential enough to affect fan identification.

**Question 5: Would you show less support for the Flyers if the team were currently in last place?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

Again substantiating this study’s findings that losses do not affect fan support, question five clearly asserts that fans will support a team even if it is in last place. Granted, the Flyers were not in last place and held a commanding lead in the standings, but the fact that respondents unanimously agree that team performance does not affect fan support even after losing games indicates that sustained losses do not influence fan allegiance.

The data from this question also helps to substantiate this study’s second hypothesis. Because respondents show that team performance does not influence fan support, sports team’s public relations practitioners should be able to affect fan attitude during losing seasons at least as much as they can during winning seasons. The data show that losses do not affect fan attitude.
Question 6: Would you follow the Flyers more closely if the hockey season were shortened from its current 82-game season?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

Despite a recent loss, fans respond that the hockey season should remain at 82 games. Fans might feel that if the season were longer the few losses that the Flyers suffered this season would not hurt the team much in the standings. Statistically, the more games played, the less each game (including losing games) affects the team’s standing.

---

**Question 7:** In what areas could the Flyers make improvements to increase the likelihood of you following the team?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduce the costs of attending a game</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have more fan-oriented activities/promotions</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase media coverage of the team</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

Ticket price remains the most important issue facing fans after both winning and losing games. However, following losing games, 16 percent more fans feel that the reduction of ticket prices is “somewhat important” compared to 18 percent after winning games. Even though the data indicate that losses do not affect fan support, it might affect fans’ likelihood of paying to see the team play, especially when the team’s ticket prices are the highest of any team in the NHL.
The issue of fan-oriented promotions and activities became the least important of all improvements among fans following losing games. (The issue of increasing media coverage was least important to fans after winning games.) Fans might feel that the team is patronizing them when it holds such activities and promotions after losing games and not taking its relationship with fans seriously enough.

Following losing games, the majority of fans indicated that increasing media exposure was “somewhat important” to them compared to fan-oriented activities and promotions in data set two. Fans might have felt that by increasing the amount of media exposure after losing games, they could find out why the team lost and what it is doing to ensure it does not lose in the future.

**Question 8:** In EACH block, please rank which items you would most like to see happen.

**BLOCK A: COSTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower ticket prices</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower parking prices at the Wachovia Center</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower concession prices at the Wachovia Center</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

While only an additional four percent of respondents feel that the issue of ticket prices is “most important” to them following losing games compared to following winning games, 10 percent fewer feel the issue was “least important.” Clearly, losses reinforce fans’ dissatisfaction with the high price of Flyers tickets. While the data shows that fan support remains unaffected by team performance, team performance might affect fan’s
inclination to show that support with their pocketbooks—the spirit might be willing, but
the checkbook might not.

The influence of losing games on fans does not affect their feelings on the issue of
costs at the Wachovia Center. The only notable difference between wins and
losses is that six percent fewer fans indicate that the parking issue was “least important”
to them compared to fans after winning games. The issue of parking costs might have
been more important to fans after losing games for the same reasons that ticket prices are
more important—even though their support for the team does not fade, their willingness
to invest their money to see the Flyers lose does fade.

Fans’ concerns over concession prices also drop considerably after losing games
compared to winning games (66 percent deem the issue “least important” after losing
games compared to 52 percent after winning games). Again, because concessions are not
a required cost to see the Flyers play, fans are uninterested in any change in this area. It
might have been more important to fans after winning games that were experiencing the
“BIRG” tendency, and who might be more likely to imbibe to celebrate.
TABLE: FAN RELATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide greater player accessibility</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide greater management accessibility</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsor more giveaways and contests</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

Surprisingly, the number of respondents that indicate that player accessibility concern them rose six percent following losing games compared to winning games. In contrast to Cialdini’s “CORFing” tendency, more Flyers fans seek access to their favorite players after losing games compared to winning games. Fans might have felt that by increasing their access to players after losing games, they would strengthen their relationship with the team—akin to the idea that difficult times bring people closer together.

More fans might feel that management accessibility is more important to them after losing games than after winning games because they see management as being responsible for remedying the problems causing poor team performance—such as trading bad players, acquiring good players, etc. In addition, since fans feel so attached to the team, they might feel as though they have a right to influence management’s decisions on such issues and therefore are entitled to greater accessibility to do so.

Like question seven, respondents indicate that fan activities and promotions are least important to them following losing games. Again, fans might feel as though the team is
trying to buy their support through such activities when all they really want is greater access to the team.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BLOCK C: MEDIA COVERAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have more player appearances on radio and TV talk shows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a Flyers-only weekly TV or radio show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide more Flyers coverage on local TV news/local newspaper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

The idea of increasing player appearances on radio and TV talk shows interest respondents after losing games least of all the proposed changes involving media coverage (up 12 percent over winning games). Respondents might feel that this type of media exposure is too impersonal and does not provide the accessibility that a Flyers-only show would.

Respondents indicate the idea of having a Flyers-only weekly radio or TV show is “most important” to them after both winning and losing games. However, an additional 18 percent of respondents that find the idea “somewhat important” following losing games versus winning games. Respondents might feel that a Flyers-only show would provide more personal and in-depth information regarding why the team lost. Additionally, it might help to reestablish the bond between fans and players following losing games.
The idea of increasing team coverage on local TV news/newspapers increases four percent among fans who deem it “least important” following losing games. Again, the literature indicates that the news media’s increasingly pervasive and derogatory reporting style negatively affects fans’ relationships with their favorite team, especially after losing games. Therefore, fans might feel that by increasing the amount of local media coverage after losing games, their bond with the Flyers will be jeopardized and therefore should not be increased, i.e. the no news is goods news mentality.
Fan Intercept Studies
Data Set IV (DIEHARD FANS)

Demographic Breakdown:

- 59% male, 41% female

- 0% viewed 1-10 games per season
  3% viewed 11-30 games per season
  18% viewed 31-50 games per season
  79% viewed 50+ games per season

- 50% attended 0-10 games in person per season
  32% attended 11-20 games in person per season
  12% attended 21-30 games in person per season
  6% attended 30+ games in person per season

- 35% were between the ages 18-28
  41% were between the ages 29-39
  21% were between the ages 40-50
  0% were between the ages 51-60
  3% were 61 years old or above

- **Profile of a typical diehard fan:** Male, between age 29-39, attend 0-10 games in person and view the remaining games during the season

**Question 4: Do you identify with this season’s Flyers team more than last year’s team?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>82%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

As expected, fans classifying themselves as either “average” or “casual” indicate that they identify with the team more than fans that state they are “diehard.” This might be due to “diehard fans’” long-standing relationship with the Flyers and their experiences with the team’s many good, but not championship seasons. However, the majority of “diehard fans” still state they identify more with this season’s team than last season’s team indicating that even though the Flyers won in the playoffs last year, “diehard fans”
still count on a Stanley Cup this year. Moreover, in comparison with "average" and "casual fans," "diehard fans" might be reluctant to say they identify with a team that has new players replacing the team’s former stars.

A series of injuries plagued the Flyers this season forcing the team to acquire new players to replace those put on injured reserve. Most notably, Flyers captain Keith Primeau as well as all-star center and fan favorite Jeremy Roenick were replaced during the second half of the season, which might have caused "diehard fans" to lessen their identification with the new players, and subsequently with the entire team. "Average" and "casual fans" that do not have a long-standing relationship with the team, might not have had this experience.

**Question 5: Would you show less support for the Flyers if they were currently in last place?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

Even though "diehard fans" show they identify with the team less this season than last season in comparison with the "average" fans, their allegiance to the team is strongest among all fan demographics except "casual" fans (both 100 percent). Clearly, "diehard" fans care little about team performance even though the Flyers did have a commanding lead over their division rivals, the New Jersey Devils, in the standings when this study was conducted.

Again, with the Flyers success this season, "diehard fans" might be unable to imagine their beloved team in last place, which might have affected their response to this question.
Question 6: Would you follow the Flyers more closely if the hockey season was shortened from its current 82-game season?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

As expected, "diehard fans" clearly indicate that they do not want the hockey season shortened from its current length. In comparison with "average" and "casual fans," "diehard fans" have more invested in their relationship with the Flyers, i.e. time watching games, money spent on tickets, etc. Therefore, they might want that investment to "pay off" for a longer period than other fan demographics. A longer season allows them to reap the benefits from their roles as team supporters as well as strengthen their own identity with the team for more of the year.

Question 7: In what areas could the Flyers make improvements to increase the likelihood of you following the team?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduce the cost of attending a game</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have more fan-oriented activities/promotions</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase media coverage of the team</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

"Diehard fans" indicate that while the costs of attending a game were important to them, far fewer felt it is as important compared to "average" and "casual fans" (82 percent for "average" and 100 percent for "casual"). "Diehard fans" might feel that their relationship with the Flyers is so important enough that they are willing to pay high ticket
prices to see their favorite players in person whereas “average” and “casual fans” might not feel as passionately about their relationship with team.

Responses to the question regarding fan-oriented activities/promotions are equal among all three demographics—each find them “somewhat important.” Of the three however, more “diehard fans” find them to be “most important” of all fan types (nine percent for “average” and zero percent for “casual”). “Diehard fans” might enjoy such activities because it shows that the team values its relationship with them. In addition, “diehard fans” might feel these activities reciprocate the affection they have for the team, i.e. fans show they care about the team by watching games and the team shows it cares about the fans by having fan-oriented activities and promotions.

All three fan demographics show little interest in increasing the amount of team media coverage (“average” 64 percent, “casual” 40 percent). The lack of interest in media coverage might indicate that all fan types, not just “diehard fans,” feel that the media provides little information that helps them bond with the team. This might be due to the sports media’s content, which as the literature indicates, tends to dwell on the negative aspects of sports and athletes.
Question 8: In EACH block, please rank which items you would most like to see happen.

### BLOCK A: COSTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower ticket prices</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower parking prices at the Wachovia Center</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower concession prices at the Wachovia Center</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

Like other fan demographics, 63 percent of “diehard fans” indicate that Flyers ticket prices are too expensive. In addition, half of those surveyed say that they attend 0-10 games per season substantiating their dislike with the price of tickets. However, fewer “diehard fans” are as upset with ticket prices compared with “average” and “casual fans” (95 percent for “average,” 100 percent for “casual”) indicating that because of their stronger relationship with the team, “diehard fans” are more willing to pay high prices to see their team play.

The issue of parking prices at the Wachovia Center remains constant at about 50 percent for all three fan demographics. All fans, including “diehard fans,” might be somewhat concerned about parking costs because in relation to high ticket prices, the $10 average to park is still important, but overall seems insignificant.

Like “average” and “casual fans,” “diehard fans” feel that concession prices are the least important off all costs incurred in attending a Flyers game at the Wachovia Center. Again, this might be because these costs are discretionary and not required to see the Flyers play.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide greater player accessibility</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide greater management accessibility</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsor more giveaways and contests</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

As with all three demographics, “diehard fans” feel that player accessibility is the most important issue regarding fan relations. However, “diehard fans” are least concerned with the issue compared with the other two fan types (68 percent for “average,” 60 percent for “casual”). “Diehard fans” might feel that their bond with the team is already strong enough and even though they might like to have greater accessibility with players, it is not necessary to strengthen their relationship with the team.

“Diehard fans” also show little concern with increasing the amount of management accessibility. Like player accessibility, “diehard fans” might not see a need for increasing management accessibility because their relationship with the team is so strong that making such a change would be unnecessary.

Like “average” and “casual fans,” “diehard fans” also feel that increasing the number of giveaways and contests is least important of all possible fan relations changes (both “diehard” and “average fans” tied at 55 percent while 60 percent of “casual fans” feel it
was least important). This again suggests that bobble-heads and ticket raids do little in affecting fan interest in the team.

**BLOCK C: MEDIA COVERAGE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have more player appearances on radio and TV talk shows</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a Flyers-only weekly TV or radio show</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide more Flyers coverage on local TV news/local newspapers</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation:**

In contrast with “average fans,” “diehard fans” indicate that having more player appearances on radio and TV talk shows is of little importance to them (50 percent of “average fans” feel it was most important). “Diehard fans” might feel that such shows patronize the players and do not reinforce their identification with them. Interestingly, zero percent of “causal fans” feel it is either least important or most important, which might indicate that they identify so little with the team that they are not even interested enough to watch or listen to such shows.

However, both “diehard” and “casual fans” feel that having a Flyers-only weekly TV or radio show is the most important change the Flyers could make as far as increasing media coverage. Unlike a radio or TV talk show that might include frivolous information, “diehard” and “casual fans” might feel that a Flyers-only show would include in-depth information that allows them to get to know the team better, which also satisfies their desire to increase player accessibility.
Unlike "average" and "casual fans" that feel that increasing local news/newspaper
coverage of the team is least important, "diehard" fans indicate that it is of some interest
to them. While 38 percent feel it is "somewhat important" and only 29 percent feel it is
"most important," indicating that "diehard fans" might be less upset by the sports media's
reporting style. That is, in comparison with the less identified "average" and "casual
fans," "diehard fans" might feel they are less influenced by the sports media. In addition,
they might be able sift through the extraneous sensationalist coverage that the literature
indicated is becoming increasingly popular in the sports media and get to the information
they seek, i.e. unbiased information like players statistics, team standings, etc.
Question 9: (optional) What else could the Flyers do to increase the likelihood of you following the team? (please explain)

Key: Number of Comments

M = Management Issues 4
$ = Money Issue 3
P = Player Issue 7
F = Fights 5
PR = Public Relations Issue 3

Key: Responses:

P  Goal Tending Improvement!!!!!
M  Stop Making DUMBASS Trades
P  A better goalie
M  More network coverage of the NHL. Settle the labor problem. Reinvigorate the game through rule changes
M  Question Bobby Clarke's moves and player trades
M  Get Justin Williams Back!
P  Win the Stanley Cup
F  More fighting
F  More fights
F  Allow more fights
PR  Close up pictures of the Goalie's helmets
F  More fighting
F  Fights
P  Win
S  Just reduce season ticket prices would be the best thing they could do
S  Drop ticket prices
PR  They should have more auctions on team equipment
PR/S  More fan activities for families at a lower cost
P  Advance further into the playoffs
P  More wins
P  Win a cup

Interpretation

While most “diehard fans” indicate that wins during the season and/or a Stanley Cup championship would be the best thing the Flyers could do to increase the likelihood of them following the team, many substantiate the review of the literature regarding the affection that established hockey fans have for fighting. Responses netting these results came after the Flyers March 5, 2004 game against the Ottawa Senators in which the
NHL's penalty minutes record was broken. Within a 32-second span, there were 21 fighting majors contributing to the game’s total of 419 penalty minutes.

The following box score excerpt (penalty minutes) details the game.

(Source: www.philadelphiaflyers.com)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Player</th>
<th>Misconduct Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>18:15</td>
<td>Danny Markov</td>
<td>(Game misconduct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>18:15</td>
<td>Donald Brashear</td>
<td>(Game misconduct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>18:15</td>
<td>Robert Esche</td>
<td>(Game misconduct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>18:15</td>
<td>Robert Esche</td>
<td>(Goalie leave crease)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>18:15</td>
<td>Donald Brashear</td>
<td>(Instigator)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>18:15</td>
<td>Donald Brashear</td>
<td>(Misconduct (10 min))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>18:15</td>
<td>Christopher Neil</td>
<td>(Fighting major)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>18:15</td>
<td>Zdeno Chara</td>
<td>(Fighting major)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>18:15</td>
<td>Zdeno Chara</td>
<td>(Game misconduct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>18:15</td>
<td>Zdeno Chara</td>
<td>(Instigator)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>18:15</td>
<td>Mattias Timander</td>
<td>(Fighting major)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>18:15</td>
<td>Radovan Somik</td>
<td>(Fighting major)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>18:21</td>
<td>Mike Fisher</td>
<td>(Fighting major)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>18:21</td>
<td>Mike Fisher</td>
<td>(Game misconduct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>18:21</td>
<td>Mike Fisher</td>
<td>(Misconduct (10 min))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>18:21</td>
<td>Michal Handzus</td>
<td>(Fighting major)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>18:21</td>
<td>Michal Handzus</td>
<td>(Game misconduct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>18:21</td>
<td>Michal Handzus</td>
<td>(Misconduct (10 min))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>18:45</td>
<td>Bryan Smolinski</td>
<td>(Fighting major)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>18:45</td>
<td>Wade Redden</td>
<td>(Fighting major)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>18:45</td>
<td>Bryan Smolinski</td>
<td>(Game misconduct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>18:45</td>
<td>Wade Redden</td>
<td>(Game misconduct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>18:45</td>
<td>Wade Redden</td>
<td>(Misconduct (10 min))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>18:45</td>
<td>John LeClair</td>
<td>(Fighting major)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>18:45</td>
<td>Mark Recchi</td>
<td>(Fighting major)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>18:45</td>
<td>John LeClair</td>
<td>(Game misconduct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>18:45</td>
<td>Mark Recchi</td>
<td>(Game misconduct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>18:45</td>
<td>John LeClair</td>
<td>(Holding)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>18:45</td>
<td>John LeClair</td>
<td>(Misconduct (10 min))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>18:47</td>
<td>Jason Spezza</td>
<td>(Fighting major)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>18:47</td>
<td>Jason Spezza</td>
<td>(Game misconduct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>18:47</td>
<td>Jason Spezza</td>
<td>(Misconduct (10 min))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>18:47</td>
<td>Patrick Sharp</td>
<td>(Fighting major)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>18:47</td>
<td>Patrick Sharp</td>
<td>(Game misconduct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>18:47</td>
<td>Patrick Sharp</td>
<td>(Misconduct (10 min))</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fan Intercept Studies
Data Set V (AVERAGE FANS)

Demographic Breakdown:

► 80 percent are male, 20 percent female

► 0 percent viewed between 1-10 games per season
   36 percent viewed between 11-30 games per season
   64 percent viewed between 31-50 games per season
   0 percent viewed more than 50 games per season

► 91 percent attended between 0-10 games per season
   9 percent attended between 11-20 games per season
   0 percent attended between 21-30 games per season
   0 percent attended more than 30 games per season

► 59 percent were between the ages 18-28
   41 percent were between the ages 29-39
   0 percent were between the ages 40-50
   0 percent were between the ages 51-60
   0 percent were over 61 years of age

► Profile of a typical average fan: Male, between age 18-28, attend 0-10 games in
   person and view the 31-50 games during the season

---

Question 4: Do you identify with this season's Flyers team more than last year's team?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>91%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interpretation

Nearly ten percent more “average fans” stated they identified more with this season’s Flyers team than last year’s team compared to “diehard fans” (82 percent of “diehard fans” said they identified more with this season’s team). The very fact that they are “average fans” might influence their level of identification with the team. That is, the Flyers success during the season might have greatly affected their identification with the team. Because they feel less attached to the team as “average fans,” their identification...
with it might be easier to sway—supporting the team when it wins, as it did this season or rejecting the team when it loses, as it did in the playoffs last season.

Question 5: Would you show less support for the Flyers if they were currently in last place?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interpretation

As with all other fan demographics, “average fans” show no indication that they would the support the Flyers any less if the team was in last place. This data again substantiates Levarie’s premise that most fans will support a team in spite of sustained losses. “Average fans” might feel that their level of commitment to the team, and in turn their identification with it, would increase if they support the team when it loses—essentially posing as a “diehard fan.”

However, the researcher will again note that the Flyers enjoyed considerable success during the season, maintaining a first place lead in its division throughout the regular season. All fans, including “average fans” might have been influenced by this fact, making it difficult for them to imagine the team in last place.

Question 6: Would you follow the Flyers if the hockey season were shortened from its current 82-game season?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interpretation

Responses indicating that fans that want the hockey season shortened rose 17 percent for “average fans” over “diehard fans” (15 percent of “diehard fans” said they would like
the season shortened). Because fans in this demographic identify themselves as “average,” they might be less interested in the team and therefore expend fewer resources to follow it as compared to “diehard fans.” That is, “average fans” view fewer games (less time expended) and attend fewer games (less money expended) than “diehard fans.” Accordingly, they might want the hockey season shortened to allow themselves the opportunity to be like “diehard fans” without having to sacrifice as much time and money as is necessary with a long, 82-game season.

**Question 7:** In what areas could the Flyers make improvements to increase the likelihood of you following the team?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduce the costs of attending a game</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have more fan-oriented activities/promotions</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase media coverage of the team</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation**

Like all other fan demographics, “average fans” indicate that reducing the cost of attending a game interest them most of all the possible changes designed to increase fan support. Additionally, this number rose nearly 20 percent from “diehard fans’” responses (63 percent of “diehard fans” want the cost of attending a game reduced). A reason for this might be that “average fans’” identification with the team might not be strong enough to lure them into buying expensive tickets, pay parking costs, etc. to see the team play compared to “diehard fans.”
More “average fans” indicate that increasing fan-oriented activities/promotions is “somewhat important” to them compared to “diehard fans.” However, fewer “average fans” feel this way compared to “casual fans” (11 percent for “diehard,” 40 percent for “casual”). This might be because “average fans” do not have as strong a relationship with the team as “diehard fans” do, but a stronger relationship than “casual fans.” This might lead “average fans” to be “somewhat” interested in such promotions than “diehards,” but less interested than “casual fans.”

Compared with “diehard fans,” “average fans” clearly show that they have no interest in increasing media coverage of the team (48 percent of “diehard fans” feel this way). As stated earlier, “diehard fans” might be better able to sift through the media’s sensationalistic coverage to find the unbiased information they seek whereas “average fans” might get bogged-down in the “in-your-face” media style the literature show is becoming increasingly popular.

**Question 8:** In EACH block, please rank which items you would most like to see happen.

**BLOCK A: COSTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower ticket prices</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower parking prices at the Wachovia Center</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower concession prices at the Wachovia Center</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation**

Responses concerning ticket prices clearly show the separation between “diehard fans” and “average fans.” Nearly 30 percent more “average fans” said they would like
ticket prices reduced compared to “diehard fans” (63 percent of “diehard fans” said they want ticket prices lowered). Again, because “average fans” are not as attached to the team as “diehard fans,” they might be less willing to invest the money to see the Flyers play.

Responses concerning the issue of parking prices at the Wachovia Center were nearly identical between “average fans” and “diehard fans” (three percent is the greatest disparity between the two groups—42 percent of “diehard fans” say it is “least important”). Once again, while parking is a required cost to attend a Flyers game, fans might feel the issue is only “somewhat important” because in comparison with ticket prices, parking is not that expensive.

Fewer “average fans” feel that concession prices are the “most important” issue than “diehard fans” (zero percent of “average fans” compared to 15 percent of “diehard fans”). Because “average fans” attend fewer games than “diehard fans,” they should therefore be less interested in the costs of concessions—if they are not there, they cannot buy concessions.
**Interpretation**

The data shows that more “average fans” feel that increasing player accessibility will improve the likelihood of them attending a game compared to “diehard fans” (68 percent of “diehard fans” want greater player accessibility). “Average fans” might feel that if they had the opportunity to meet or see their favorite players in person, their identification with the team might increase. In addition, “average fans” might be more interested in meeting players than “diehard fans” because “diehard fans” might feel that they already have a strong enough bond with them and do not need to meet them to reinforce their relationship.

Management accessibility interests fewer “average fans” than “diehard fans” (21 percent of “diehard fans” want more management accessibility compared to 19 percent of “average fans”). “Diehard fans” might feel that they have a greater stake in the team inasmuch as they spend more time and money following the team than “average fans.” Therefore, because “average fans” do not have as much to lose from the decisions of team management as “diehard fans” do, i.e. greater feelings of rejection and disappointment, they might have less interest greater accessibility.
### Interpretation

In contrast to “diehard fans,” “average fans” are far more interested in having their favorite players on radio or TV talk shows (50 percent of “average fans” to 26 percent of “diehard fans”). “Diehard fans” might be disinterested in seeing or hearing Flyers players on radio or TV talk shows because as the literature indicates, “diehard” Philadelphia sports fans do not like the share “their” players with outsiders. In contrast, “average fans” might not have such feelings of ownership over their favorite players, making them more receptive to the idea of having players appear on radio and TV talk shows.

Conversely, “average fans” are less interested in having a Flyers-only weekly TV or radio show than “diehard fans” (44 percent of “diehard fans” want a weekly show). Because “average fans” might be more receptive to the content of existing media outlets than “diehard fans”, they might not see the need for a Flyers-only show.

Far more “average fans” indicated that they are disinterested in seeing greater Flyers coverage in the local news media than “diehard fans” (50 percent of “average fans” compared to 32 percent of “diehard fans”). Because “average fans” view fewer games and therefore seem to be less interested in the daily activities of the team than “diehard

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have more player appearances on radio and TV talk shows</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have a Flyers-only weekly TV or radio show</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide more Flyers coverage on local TV news/newspapers</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
fans,” they might also be less concerned with the quantity of local news coverage because they have no need for it.

Question 9: (optional) What else could the Flyers do to increase the likelihood of you following the team? (please explain)

Key: Number of Comments

M = Management Issues 0
$ = Money Issue 0
P = Player Issue 0
F = Fights 2
PR = Public Relations Issue 2

Key: Responses:
PR  More media appearances and more promotion
PR  Meet one on one with their fans
F  Fights
F  Let more fighting go

Interpretation

As with “diehard fans,” “average fans” also seem interested in seeing more fights. This might be because most of the time, hockey games are officiated following many rules unique to the game, which require the fan to understand to follow the game. However, with hockey fights, there are few rules to understand, making it popular among fans who fully understand the game (“diehard fans”) and among fans that do not (“average fans”).
Fan Intercept Studies
Data Set VI (CASUAL FANS)

Demographic Breakdown:

- 100 percent were male, 0 percent were female

- 60 percent viewed between 1-10 games per season
  40 percent viewed between 11-30 games per season
  0 percent viewed between 31-50 games per season
  0 percent viewed more than 50 games per season

- 100 percent attended 0-10 games in person per season
  0 percent attended 11-20 games in person per season
  0 percent attended 21-30 games in person per season
  0 percent attend more than 30 games in person per season

- 100 percent were between the ages 18-28
  0 percent were between the ages 29-39
  0 percent were between the ages 40-50
  0 percent were between the ages 51-60
  0 percent were older 61 years of age

- Profile of a typical average fan: Male, between age 18-28, attend 0-10 games in person and view 1-10 games per season

---

Question 4: Do you identify with this season’s Flyers team more than last year’s team?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interpretation

Just as with “average fans,” respondents that identified themselves as “casual fans” might identify more with this season’s Flyers team than last year’s team because they are more flexible in their level of support. Because “average fans” expend fewer resources in their relationship with the team, (money, time, etc.) than either “average fans” or “diehard fans,” their identification with the team might be easier to sway. For instance,
because the Flyers were so successful this season, fans with less interest in the team might be influenced by this success—essentially becoming “bandwagon fans.”

**Question 5: Would you show less support for the Flyers if they were currently in last place?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation**

While “casual fans” indicate that they would support the Flyers if the team was in last place, their weak association with the team might make it difficult for them to imagine the team in last place or predict how they would feel about the team if that were the case. That is, because they do not have a strong relationship with the team (evident by how few games they view and attend), they might not be able to assess how they would feel about the team if its performance suffered, especially in light of the team’s success this season.

**Question 6: Would you follow the Flyers if the hockey season were shortened from its current 82-game season?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation**

As expected, more “casual fans” want the hockey season shortened than either “average” or “diehard fans” (15 percent of “diehard fans” and 32 percent of “average fans” want the season shortened). Because fewer “casual fans” view and attend games than “average” or “diehard fans,” they might feel that by shortening the season, they could follow the team more easily, i.e. attend more games, view more games, etc.
Question 7: In what areas could the Flyers make improvements to increase the likelihood of you following the team?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduce the costs of attending a game</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have more fan-oriented activities/promotions</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase media coverage of the team</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation**

As with both “diehard” and “average fans,” “casual fans” clearly show that they would like to see Flyers ticket prices lowered. Moreover, “casual fans” might be less willing to buy expensive tickets to see a team because they do not feel as strong an attachment to the team compared to “average” and “diehard fans.”

Surprisingly, more “casual fans” indicate that fan-oriented activities/promotions are the least important area of interest to them of all fan demographics (40 percent of “diehard fans” and 36 percent of “average fans” feel such activities are least important). However, because “casual fans” invest fewer time and resources to follow the team than either “diehard” or “average fans,” they might feel that such activities are not intended for them or they might have neither the time nor the interest in fan promotions.

Just as with “average fans,” “casual fans” have little interest in increasing the amount of Flyers media coverage, (9 percent of “average fans” want more coverage). “Casual fans” might not desire increased media coverage simply because as “casual fans,” they expend less time following the team.
**Question 8:** In EACH block, please rank which items you would most like to see happen.

**BLOCK A: COSTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Most important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower ticket prices</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower parking prices at the Wachovia Center</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower concession prices at the Wachovia Center</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation**

Interestingly, the correlation between the level of fan interest and the desire to have ticket prices lowered is again seen with “casual fan.” Fans that indicate they have a weaker relationship with the team proportionally want ticket prices reduced (63 percent of “diehard fans,” 82 percent of “average fans” and 100 percent of “casual fans”). Because “casual fans” have less interest in the team, they might be less likely to invest money to see the Flyers play, i.e. purchase tickets.

Like “diehard” and “average fans,” the issue of parking prices interest “casual fans,” but did not weigh heavily on their minds. “Casual fans” might feel that parking costs are important, but not important enough to affect the likelihood of them attending a game.

Similar to “average fans,” “casual fans” also find the issue of increasing the team’s media exposure least important. Again, because they are less interested in the team than the other two fan types, “casual fans” might not have any desire to learn more about the team through the media, making media exposure meaningless to them.
**BLOCK B: FAN RELATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide greater player accessibility</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide greater management accessibility</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsor more giveaways and contests</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation**

As with all other fan demographics, "casual fans" also indicate that increasing the amount of player accessibility is most important to them. However, more "average fans" say that player access is most important to them compared to "casual fans" (68 percent of "average fans" to 60 percent of "casual fans"). This might again indicate that "casual fans" are either not interested enough in the team or do not know the players well enough to make player accessibility an issue to them.

Like "diehard" and "average fans," "casual fans" state that management accessibility is neither the most important issue nor the least important issue to them. This issue might be "somewhat important" to "casual fans" because they might still want to know something about the team and they might see Flyers management as the means to acquire that knowledge. Additionally, regardless of fan level, all fans might want an explanation from the team's management following losses.

All three fan demographics find the issue of giveaways and contests the least important to them (55 percent for both "diehard" and "average fans"). "Casual fans" might also feel this way because they have less interest in the team, and therefore, they might not be interested in receiving giveaways or even winning the contests.
**INTERPRETATION**

"Casual fans" might feel that having more player appearances on radio and TV talk shows is "somewhat important" because it provides them with another means of increasing their identification with the team without actually having to follow the team, (easier to track wins and losses, trades, injuries, etc.)

Similarly, "casual fans" might embrace the idea of having a Flyers-only weekly TV or radio talk show because it also provides them another outlet in which to follow the team. In comparison with trying to keep up with the team’s schedule and following injury reports in the news, "casual fans" might see a weekly TV or radio show as an easy way to keep abreast of team news.

As with "diehard" and "average fans," "casual fans" also indicate that providing more coverage of the team in the local papers and on the local TV newscasts interests them least of all possible media changes. Like "diehard fans," "casual fans" might be upset with the sensationalistic style of the sports news media or, like "average fans," have little interest in seeking-out additional team news from the news media.
Question 9: (optional) What else could the Flyers do to increase the likelihood of you following the team? (please explain)

Key: Number of Comments:

M = Management Issues 0
S = Money Issue 0
P = Player Issue 0
F = Fights 2
PR = Public Relations Issue 2

Key: Responses:

M Get rid of Clarke
S Cheaper apparel

Interpretation

The lack of responses to this optional question illustrates the lack of interest "casual fans" have for the team. However, some "casual fans" did feel strongly enough about the team's management to express anger about Flyers General Manager Bob Clarke as well as the cost of team merchandise. While "casual fans" might be less interested in the team than either "average" or "diehard fans," they still might feel obliged to express their opinions on the team and its operations.
Fan Intercept Studies
Data Set VII (CROSS COMPARISONS)

**Question 4:** Do you identify more with this season’s Flyers team more than last year’s team?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diehard Fans</strong></td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average Fans</strong></td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Casual Fans</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation**

Compared to “diehard fans,” more “average” and “casual fans” might identify with this season’s team than last year’s team because as “average” and “casual fans,” their relationship with the team is not as strong as it is with “diehard fans.” That is, “average” and “casual fans”’ identification might be more flexible and prone to change than “diehard fans’”.

The literature shows that team performance influences “average” and “casual fans’” team identification more than it does for “diehard fans,” therefore, the Flyers’ success this season might account for their increased identify with this year’s team. In addition, because “diehard fans” have a stronger relationship with the team than “average” or “casual fans,” they might be less likely to identify a team with many new players, as was the case with this season’s Flyers team. Injuries beleaguered this season’s Flyers team, forcing it to acquire new players to replace those put on injured reserve.

This might affect “diehard fans” more than “average” or “casual fans” because as “diehard fans,” they formed their identification with players who are now replaced.
Question 5: Would you show less support for the Flyers if they were currently in last place?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diehard Fans</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Fans</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual Fans</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation**

Interestingly, 100 percent of both “diehard” and “casual fans” indicate that they would not support the Flyers any less if the team were in last place. The fact that the Flyers held a first place lead in their division during the entire season might affect all respondents’ answers to this question. That is, the team’s success might have made it difficult for all fan types to imagine how their support would be affected if the team was in last place.

As expected though, “diehard fans” indicate that their support for the Flyers would not falter even if the team was in last place. In contrast to “average fans,” “diehard fans”’ strong relationship with the team might account for their disinterest in team performance. “Diehard fans” might also support the team regardless of a losing season because of their strong relationship with the team.

In comparison, “average fans”’ weak relationship with the Flyers might account for their diminished team support if the team was in last place. “Average fans” might also find it easier to judge their level of team support for this hypothetical question than “diehard” and “average fans” because they have neither a great relationship with the team nor a very weak relationship with the team—like that of “casual fans.” Therefore, “average fans”’ level of impartiality might be greater than that of “diehard” and “casual fans.”
In contrast with "diehard fans"' strong team relationship, "casual fans"' very weak relationship with the team might account for why 100 percent of them state they would not support the team any less if it were in last place. Because "casual fans" have such a weak relationship with the team, they might find it very difficult to accurately judge their level of support if the team were in last place, especially in light of the Flyers success this season. The literature shows that such "bandwagon fans" often say that they will support the team no matter what but as soon as the team's performance suffers, so too does their support.

**Question 6: Would you follow the Flyers more closely if the hockey season was shortened from its current 82-game season?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diehard Fans</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Fans</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual Fans</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation**

Because "diehard fans" invest more in their relationship with the Flyers than either "average" or "casual fans," (more ticket purchases, more games viewed, etc.) they might feel that with a longer season, they receive a greater return on their "investment."

Additionally, "diehard fans" might value their relationship with the team so much that they cannot stand to see the season end because it greatly reduces the return on the "investments" they made in maintaining and strengthening their relationship with the team during the season.

In addition, when the season ends the team no longer reciprocates its relationship with fans—because there are no games, media coverage diminishes and daily "contact" with
the team is lost. With “average” and “casual fans,” this might not be especially troubling, however with “diehard fans,” that depend on this contact; the end of the season might be especially traumatic. Therefore, “diehard fans” would want the hockey season to remain at its current length whereas “average” and “casual fans” might want the season shortened.

With a shorter season, “average” and “casual fans” do not have to make the “investment” that “diehard fans” do to follow the team, making the role of fan much easier for them.

**Question 7:** In what areas could the Flyers make improvements to increase the likelihood of you following the team?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduce the cost of attending a game</td>
<td>Diehard: 64%</td>
<td>Diehard: 25%</td>
<td>Diehard: 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average: 82%</td>
<td>Average: 18%</td>
<td>Average: 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Casual: 100%</td>
<td>Casual: 0%</td>
<td>Casual: 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have more fan-oriented activities/promotions</td>
<td>Diehard: 18%</td>
<td>Diehard: 42%</td>
<td>Diehard: 40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average: 9%</td>
<td>Average: 55%</td>
<td>Average: 36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Casual: 0%</td>
<td>Casual: 40%</td>
<td>Casual: 60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase media coverage of the team</td>
<td>Diehard: 19%</td>
<td>Diehard: 33%</td>
<td>Diehard: 48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average: 9%</td>
<td>Average: 27%</td>
<td>Average: 64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Casual: 0%</td>
<td>Casual: 60%</td>
<td>Casual: 40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation**

As expected, the importance each fan type places on the costs of attending a game were proportionate to their level of support. Fewer “diehard fans” indicate that costs are most important to them compared to either “average” or “casual fans.” This might be because as “diehard fans,” they are more willing to pay high ticket prices to reinforce their already strong relationship with the team. In comparison, “average” and “casual fans”’ lower level of identification makes it harder for them to justify spending the high costs required to attend a Flyers game. Therefore, more “average” and “casual fans”
indicate that the costs of attending a game are most important to them than “diehard fans.”

Additionally, more “diehard fans” indicate that fan-oriented activities and promotions are more important to them than either “average” or “casual fans.” “Diehard fans” might feel that such activities reciprocate the strong relationships they have for the team—the “diehard fans” show their strong relationship with the team through undying support and the team shows it values its relationship with these fans by having fan-oriented promotions and activities. In contrast, “casual fans” might see such activities as uninviting in that they do not feel connected enough with the team to participate in these activities. In addition, many “average fans” state that fan-oriented promotions are “somewhat important.” This might be because some “average fans” might feel that such activities will allow them to become better connected to the team, thereby strengthening their relationship with it.

Interestingly, only “casual fans” feel that media coverage should be increased (60 percent say it is “somewhat important”). As the literature indicated, the media’s increasingly pervasive content can alienate fans and negatively affect their relationship with a sports team. Because both “diehard” and “average fans” have an interest in ensuring that their relationship with the Flyers remains strong, they might have little to no interest in increasing the team’s media exposure. These fans might worry that too much negative media exposure could hurt their relationship with the team whereas “casual fans” might have little concern over the media’s affect on their relationship with the team because their relationship is weak to begin with. Therefore, “casual fans” would have no concerns about increasing media exposure.
Question 8: In EACH block, please rank which items you would most like to see happen

### BLOCK A: COSTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower ticket prices</td>
<td>Diehard: 63%</td>
<td>Diehard: 15%</td>
<td>Diehard: 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average: 95%</td>
<td>Average: 5%</td>
<td>Average: 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Casual: 100%</td>
<td>Casual: 0%</td>
<td>Casual: 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower parking prices at the Wachovia Center</td>
<td>Diehard: 7%</td>
<td>Diehard: 51%</td>
<td>Diehard: 42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average: 5%</td>
<td>Average: 50%</td>
<td>Average: 45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Casual: 0%</td>
<td>Casual: 60%</td>
<td>Casual: 40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower concession prices at the Wachovia Center</td>
<td>Diehard: 15%</td>
<td>Diehard: 34%</td>
<td>Diehard: 51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average: 0%</td>
<td>Average: 45%</td>
<td>Average: 55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Casual: 0%</td>
<td>Casual: 40%</td>
<td>Casual: 60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Interpretation

Fewer “diehard fans” indicate that ticket prices concern them compared to “average” and “casual fans.” As with the previous question, “diehard fans” might be more willing to pay high ticket prices because of their strong relationship with the team. In contrast, both “average” and “casual” fans clearly show that ticket prices concern them indicating that fans with lower levels of team identification are less likely to pay high prices to see the team play. In addition, the weaker the relationship a fan has with a team, the more ticket prices concern them—“casual fans,” with weakest relationship with the team, are most interested in seeing ticket prices lowered.

All fan types indicate that parking costs at the Wachovia Center are “somewhat important.” In addition, none of the fans with weak relationships with the team (who accordingly attended fewer games) feel that parking costs are the most important issue. Because “diehard fans” attend more games than either “average” or “casual fans,” it makes sense that more of them feel that the issue of parking costs was “most important.”
Similarly, of all fan types, "diehard fans" are the only one to indicate that the issue of concession prices was "most important." The majority of all fan types indicate that concession prices are "least important," indicating that all fans care little about the prices of concessions at the Wachovia Center.

### BLOCK B: FAN RELATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide greater player accessibility</td>
<td>Diehard: 45%</td>
<td>Diehard: 47%</td>
<td>Diehard: 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average: 68%</td>
<td>Average: 23%</td>
<td>Average: 9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Casual: 60%</td>
<td>Casual: 0%</td>
<td>Casual: 40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide greater management accessibility</td>
<td>Diehard: 21%</td>
<td>Diehard: 41%</td>
<td>Diehard: 38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average: 19%</td>
<td>Average: 45%</td>
<td>Average: 36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Casual: 40%</td>
<td>Casual: 60%</td>
<td>Casual: 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsor more giveaways and contests</td>
<td>Diehard: 34%</td>
<td>Diehard: 11%</td>
<td>Diehard: 55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average: 14%</td>
<td>Average: 31%</td>
<td>Average: 55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Casual: 0%</td>
<td>Casual: 40%</td>
<td>Casual: 60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation**

All fan types find the idea of providing greater player accessibility "most important" in terms of fan relations. More "average fans" indicate player accessibility is "most important" compared with "average" and "casual fans." This might be because "average fans" feel they need greater access to players to strengthen their bond. In contrast, "diehard fans" might feel that their relationship with the team is already strong enough that they do no need greater player accessibility and "casual fans" might be too disinterested in improving their relationship to care about increasing player accessibility.

In terms of increasing management accessibility, all three fan types agree that the issue is "somewhat important" to them. Interestingly, more "casual fans" indicate that management accessibility is "most important" to them compared with the other two fan
types. This might be because "casual fans" still want contact with the team and management offers them an easy way to get that contact. For instance, it is easier to remember one person, i.e. the coach, than to try following an entire roster of players. In addition, regardless of fan type, all fans might want access to the team’s management—especially after a loss.

In accordance with question seven, more "diehard fans" indicate that fan-oriented activities, like giveaways and contests, interest them compared with "average" and "casual fans." Again, "diehard fans" might feel that such activities are important because they illustrate that the team cares about them. Moreover, such activities interest "diehard fans" most because they care most about their relationship with the team than "average" or "casual fans." Therefore, any indication that the team cares about the relationship fans have with it will interest those fans that depend on that relationship most, e.g. "diehard fans."
**Interpretation**

While few “diehard” and “casual fans” are interested in increasing player appearances on radio and TV talk shows, the majority of “average fans” feel it is “most important.” “Average fans” might feel that such appearances would help them connect with players thereby strengthening their relationship with the team without having to expend more resources to do so (money on tickets, time to view games, etc.). In contrast, “diehard fans” might feel that their relationship with the team is strong enough that such media appearances would be of little use in improving their relationship with the team. In addition, “casual fans”’ relationship with the team might be so weak that any increase in player appearances on talk shows would be negligible in strengthening their relationship and therefore of little interest to them.

In contrast to “average fans’” support of increasing player talk show appearances, they show little interest in having a Flyers-only weekly TV or radio show. “Average fans” might feel that they would not get an intimate enough look at players on a weekly show as they would on talk shows. Therefore, “average fans” might feel that a weekly show would not provide the means to strengthen their relationship with the team. Conversely, “diehard fans” might feel that as opposed to talk shows, a weekly Flyers-only show
would provide in-depth, informative information on the team versus idle chitchat as is often the case on talk shows. Because "diehard fans" are more knowledgeable about the team, they might feel that the weekly show would provide them with new information on the team rather than banal, uninformative news like that of a talk show. In contrast, "casual fans" might feel that a weekly Flyers-only show would provide them with an easy way to keep abreast of the team—they would not have to sift through sports pages, sit through the evening news, etc. to learn about the team.

As expected, of the three fan types, only "diehard fans" show any substantial interest in increasing the amount of Flyers coverage in the local news media. In opposition, the majority of "average" and "casual fans" indicate that news coverage is "least important" to them.

"Diehard fans" might be the only fan type with enough knowledge of the team to understand and value news media coverage. They might feel that the coverage provides them with valuable information on the team that helps reinforce their relationship with the team. In contrast, "average" and "casual fans" might not understand or even be interested enough in the team to seek news media coverage of the Flyers; therefore, providing more coverage would interest them very little.

**Question 9: (optional) What else could the Flyers do to increase the likelihood of you following the team? (please explain)**

As expected, "diehard fans" provide the greatest number of responses (19 responses) to this optional question. "Diehard fans"' strong relationship with the team might encourage them to voice their concerns versus "average" (four responses) and "casual fans" (two responses), that might feel they do not have the "right" to voice their concerns,
or who might be not be interested in the team enough to take the time to provide a remark to this optional question.

The content of the responses varied among the three fan types. Whereas “diehard fans” are most interested in team performance (i.e. “goal tending improvements”), “average fans” are more interested in player appearances and fan relations.

Interestingly, the correlation between “diehard” and “casual fans” continues in this question. Both of these fan types comment on managerial improvements (“causal fans” say “Get rid of Clarke” while “diehard fans” say “Question Bobby Clarke’s moves and player trades”). This indicates that “diehard” and “casual fans” share similar feelings about the team, but whereas “diehard fans” might have these feelings because of their strong relationship with the team, “casual fans” might have them because of their weak relationship with the team. That is, “diehard fans” might feel obliged to comment about the team because of their strong relationship with it while “casual fans” feel free to comment about the team because of their weak relationship with the team—essentially, they have nothing to lose by voicing their opinion.

In contrast, “average fans”’ intermediate relationship with the team (weaker than “diehard fans,” but stronger than “casual fans”) might prohibit them from commenting on the teams’ management. Therefore, their interests might lie in fan relations activities.

In addition, “average” and “diehard fans” both feel that there should be more hockey fights while “casual fans” did not comment on the issue. This might be because “casual fans” either do not like this aspect of the game or do not understand the use of fighting in hockey whereas “average” and “diehard fans” enjoy fights because they understand it is a tactic of the game and not just mindless violence. In addition, because “average” and
“diehard fans” view more games than “casual fans,” they might have seen the March 5, 2004 game against the Ottawa Senators in which the NHL’s record for penalty minutes in a single game was broken. This might have spurred “diehard” and “average fans’” interest in fighting.
Content Analysis
Data Set VIII (Philadelphia Daily News Articles)

The researcher obtained the following data through a content analysis of the Philadelphia Daily News newspaper. Stories about the Philadelphia Flyers were collected throughout the season to determine if the articles provided positive or negative comments regarding team analyses, player perspectives, coaching staff and Flyers management comments as well as game summaries. The researcher used words and phrases based on intercoder-reliability tests to perform the content analysis. The words and phrases were obtained from coders who determined that them to be characteristic of negative and positive comments on both players and management. In addition, the researcher measured the column inches of each article.

The coders deemed that the following words and phrases, or their derivations, describe positive and negative Daily News’ comments. The researcher used this list as a guide in completing the content analysis.

<p>| Management |
|------------|------------|
| <strong>Negative</strong> | <strong>Positive</strong> |
| unfortunate | amused |
| rattled | good effect |
| find a way to win | regrouped |
| holes in the roster | beaten |
| need wins | good call |
| short-lived | great idea |
| limping | key timing |
| bad call | experienced |
| bad news | good sign |
| gave up | good job |
| not happy | |
| questionable | |
| settled | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Players</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gave up</td>
<td>win fight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poor play</td>
<td>good news</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rattled</td>
<td>good power play</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beaten</td>
<td>recover</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>penalty-filled</td>
<td>complete</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pulled</td>
<td>smart play</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>out-manned</td>
<td>suck it up</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stink</td>
<td>key play</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mistakes</td>
<td>triumph</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>turnover</td>
<td>saved game</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>got soft</td>
<td>shut-out</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>overwhelmed</td>
<td>complete</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exposed</td>
<td>took advantage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>missed opportunities</td>
<td>red hot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perfect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>composed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Totals: |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team Management</th>
<th>Players</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Comments A</td>
<td>Positive Comments B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winning Games</td>
<td>40 (49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Losing Games</td>
<td>27 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tie Games</td>
<td>15 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Comments 890</td>
<td>100 (11%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cross-comparison:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team Management</th>
<th>Players</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Comments A</td>
<td>Positive Comments C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winning Games</td>
<td>59 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Losing Games</td>
<td>31 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tie Games</td>
<td>10 (10%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interpretation

The results from the content analysis of the *Philadelphia Daily News* substantiate this study’s first hypothesis that media coverage will decrease as the team’s performance decreases (1,037 column inches after winning games compared to 839.25 after losing games). The difference in space devoted to Flyers coverage between winning and losing games is 197.75 column inches. In addition, there were four more back-cover stories for winning games than losing games. (The *Philadelphia Daily News* is a tabloid-style newspaper with a front cover as well as back cover, which is usually devoted to sports and entertainment stories.)

An explanation might lie in the fact that there were fewer losing games than winning games, which would have increased the amount *Daily News* coverage accordingly. Likewise, the disproportionate number of losing games versus winning games might have affected the number of positive comments after winning games and negative comments after losing games. That is, because there were more winning games than losing games, it makes sense that there would also be more positive comments than negative comments.
However, the great variance between positive versus negative comments between winning and losing games (59 to 20 for management comments and 258 to 64 for players after winning games) still indicates that the quality of coverage favored the team after winning games far more than after losing games regardless of the total number games. This might be attributed to a lack of fan interest following losing games.

For instance, whereas Flyers fans might want more coverage of the team after winning games to relive the glory of the team’s triumph (the BIRG tendency), they might be less interested in reliving the failures of the team’s losses (the CORF tendency). Accordingly, the editors and writers of the *Daily News* might be less willing to publish an abundance of negative stories on the team after losses because they might not want to antagonize their audience—in this case, Flyers fans. However, the number of negative comments following losing games still indicates that the writers and editors of the *Daily News* were not reticent about publishing negative comments about the team.

For instance, the nearly equal number of positive comments after winning games and negative comments after losing games (258 positive player comments after winning games and 251 negative player comments after losing games) illustrates that any possible allegiance to the team by the sports writers that might have affected their reporting did not exist, contrary to what the literature suggests. Clearly, the sportswriters were just as open with their criticism of the team when it lost as they were with their praise of the team when it won.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Winning Games (date)</th>
<th>Positive Comments A</th>
<th>Negative Comments B</th>
<th>Positive Comments C</th>
<th>Negative Comments D</th>
<th>Column Inches</th>
<th>Back Cover Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/9/03</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>43.75</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/18/03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/27/03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/29/03</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/1/03</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20.25</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/8/03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24.75</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/11/03</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>26.75</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/13/03</td>
<td>Used for coding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/15/03</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>24.75</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/20/03</td>
<td>Used for coding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/22/03</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>28.50</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/29/03</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>28.50</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/3/03</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>43.75</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/5/03</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>43.75</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/8/03</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/20/03</td>
<td>Used for coding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/30/03</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>44.25</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>29.25</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/16/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29.25</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/17/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19.50</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/22/04</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40.50</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/24/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>47.25</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/25/04</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.25</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/31/04</td>
<td>Used for coding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/4/04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/5/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>29.25</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/10/04</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>29.25</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/12/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29.25</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/14/04</td>
<td>Used for coding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/21/04</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24.75</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/24/04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/3/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29.25</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/5/04</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td>29.25</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/9/04</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>29.25</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/13/04</td>
<td>Used for coding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/1/04</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>42.75</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| Total               | 59                  | 20                  | 258                 | 64                  | 1037         | 8               |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Losing Games (date)</th>
<th>Team Management</th>
<th>Players</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive Comments A</td>
<td>Negative Comments B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/21/03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/22/03</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/30/03</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/1/03</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/13/03</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/18/03</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/21/03</td>
<td>Used for coding</td>
<td>sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/22/03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/23/03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/27/03</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/3/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/4/04</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/12/04</td>
<td>Used for coding</td>
<td>sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/13/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/20/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/2/04</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/16/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/17/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/19/04</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/28/04</td>
<td>Used for coding</td>
<td>sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/29/04</td>
<td>Used for coding</td>
<td>sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/6/04</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/18/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/25/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/27/04</td>
<td>Used for coding</td>
<td>sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/1/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/2/04</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Season Totals (Tie Games)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tie Games (date)</th>
<th>Team Management</th>
<th>Players</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive Comments A</td>
<td>Negative Comments B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/11/03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/16/03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/25/03</td>
<td>Used for coding sample</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/18/03</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/26/03</td>
<td>Used for coding sample</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/6/03</td>
<td>Used for coding sample</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/10/03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/12/03</td>
<td>Used for coding sample</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/30/03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/7/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/28/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/11/04</td>
<td>Used for coding sample</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/14/04</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/4/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Content Analysis
Data Set IX *(Philadelphia Daily News Breakdown of Data by Month)*

**October**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Winning Games (date)</th>
<th>Team Management</th>
<th>Players</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive Comments A</td>
<td>Negative Comments B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/9/03</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/10/03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/27/03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/29/03</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Losing Games (date)</th>
<th>Team Management</th>
<th>Players</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive Comments A</td>
<td>Negative Comments B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/21/03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/22/03</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/30/03</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tie Games (date)</th>
<th>Team Management</th>
<th>Players</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive Comments A</td>
<td>Negative Comments B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/11/03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/16/03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/25/03</td>
<td>Used for coding</td>
<td>sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### November

#### Team Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Winning Games (date)</th>
<th>Positive Comments A</th>
<th>Negative Comments B</th>
<th>Positive Comments C</th>
<th>Negative Comments D</th>
<th>Column Inches</th>
<th>Back Cover-Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11/1/03</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/6/03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16.75</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/8/03</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>18.75</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/11/03</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>74.25</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/13/03</td>
<td>Used</td>
<td>for coding</td>
<td>sample</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/15/03</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/20/03</td>
<td>Used</td>
<td>for coding</td>
<td>sample</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/22/03</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>18.50</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/29/03</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>18.50</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>47</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>193.25</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Players

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Losing Games</th>
<th>Positive Comments A</th>
<th>Negative Comments B</th>
<th>Positive Comments C</th>
<th>Negative Comments D</th>
<th>Column Inches</th>
<th>Back Cover-Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Flyers</td>
<td>did not</td>
<td>lose in</td>
<td>November</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Tie Games

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tie Games</th>
<th>Positive Comments A</th>
<th>Negative Comments B</th>
<th>Positive Comments C</th>
<th>Negative Comments D</th>
<th>Column Inches</th>
<th>Back Cover-Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11/18/03</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/26/03</td>
<td>Used</td>
<td>for coding</td>
<td>sample</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### December

**Team Management Players**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Winning Games (date)</th>
<th>Positive Comments A</th>
<th>Negative Comments B</th>
<th>Positive Comments C</th>
<th>Negative Comments D</th>
<th>Column Inches</th>
<th>Back Cover-Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/3/03</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>45.25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/5/03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/8/03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/20/03</td>
<td>Used for coding sample</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/30/03</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>44.25</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Losing Games (date)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Losing Games (date)</th>
<th>Positive Comments A</th>
<th>Negative Comments B</th>
<th>Positive Comments C</th>
<th>Negative Comments D</th>
<th>Column Inches</th>
<th>Back Cover-Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/1/03</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28.25</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/13/03</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27.75</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/16/03</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>63.25</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/18/03</td>
<td>Used for coding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/21/03</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21.75</td>
<td></td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/23/03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/27/03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17.75</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>199.25</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tie Games (date)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tie Games (date)</th>
<th>Positive Comments A</th>
<th>Negative Comments B</th>
<th>Positive Comments C</th>
<th>Negative Comments D</th>
<th>Column Inches</th>
<th>Back Cover-Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/8/03</td>
<td>Used for coding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/10/03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>37.75</td>
<td></td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/12/03</td>
<td>Used for coding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/30/03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22.75</td>
<td></td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>60.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### January

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Winning Games (date)</th>
<th>Positive Comments A</th>
<th>Negative Comments B</th>
<th>Positive Comments C</th>
<th>Negative Comments D</th>
<th>Column Inches</th>
<th>Back Cover-Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/2/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26.75</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/16/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>31.00</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/17/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20.25</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/22/04</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44.25</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/24/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>41.75</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/25/04</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.25</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/31/04</td>
<td>Used for coding</td>
<td>sample</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>186.25</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Losing Games (date)</th>
<th>Positive Comments A</th>
<th>Negative Comments B</th>
<th>Positive Comments C</th>
<th>Negative Comments D</th>
<th>Column Inches</th>
<th>Back Cover-Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/3/04</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/8/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/10/04</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23.75</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/12/04</td>
<td>Used for coding</td>
<td>sample</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/13/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>34.25</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/20/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tie Games (date)</th>
<th>Positive Comments A</th>
<th>Negative Comments B</th>
<th>Positive Comments C</th>
<th>Negative Comments D</th>
<th>Column Inches</th>
<th>Back Cover-Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/7/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/28/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>36.25</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>76.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## February

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Winning Games (date)</th>
<th>Positive Comments A</th>
<th>Negative Comments B</th>
<th>Positive Comments C</th>
<th>Negative Comments D</th>
<th>Column Inches</th>
<th>Cover-Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/4/04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>44.75</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/5/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/10/04</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40.25</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/12/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27.75</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/14/04</td>
<td>Used for coding</td>
<td>sample</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/21/04</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/24/04</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>42.25</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>49</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>245.50</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Losing Games (date)</th>
<th>Positive Comments A</th>
<th>Negative Comments B</th>
<th>Positive Comments C</th>
<th>Negative Comments D</th>
<th>Column Inches</th>
<th>Back Cover-Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/2/04</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25.25</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/16/04</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>49.75</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/17/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30.75</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/19/04</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/28/04</td>
<td>Used for coding</td>
<td>sample</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/29/04</td>
<td>Used for coding</td>
<td>sample</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td><strong>170.75</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tie Games (date)</th>
<th>Positive Comments A</th>
<th>Negative Comments B</th>
<th>Positive Comments C</th>
<th>Negative Comments D</th>
<th>Column Inches</th>
<th>Cover-Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/26/04</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>33.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### March

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Winning Games (date)</th>
<th>Positive Comments A</th>
<th>Negative Comments B</th>
<th>Positive Comments C</th>
<th>Negative Comments D</th>
<th>Column Inches</th>
<th>Back Cover-Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/3/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.75</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/5/04</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24.75</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/9/04</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>71.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/13/04</td>
<td>Used for coding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/20/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31.25</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/23/04</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>35.25</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>55</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>185.50</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Losing Games (date)</th>
<th>Positive Comments A</th>
<th>Negative Comments B</th>
<th>Positive Comments C</th>
<th>Negative Comments D</th>
<th>Column Inches</th>
<th>Back Cover-Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/6/04</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38.75</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/18/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/25/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/27/04</td>
<td>Used for coding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>120.75</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tie Games (date)</th>
<th>Positive Comments A</th>
<th>Negative Comments B</th>
<th>Positive Comments C</th>
<th>Negative Comments D</th>
<th>Column Inches</th>
<th>Back Cover-Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/11/04</td>
<td>Used for coding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/14/04</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>62.25</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>62.25</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### April

#### Team Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Winning Games (date)</th>
<th>Positive Comments A</th>
<th>Negative Comments B</th>
<th>Positive Comments C</th>
<th>Negative Comments D</th>
<th>Column Inches</th>
<th>Back Cover-Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4/1/04</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>42.75</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>42.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Losing Games (date)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Losing Games (date)</th>
<th>Positive Comments A</th>
<th>Negative Comments B</th>
<th>Positive Comments C</th>
<th>Negative Comments D</th>
<th>Column Inches</th>
<th>Back Cover-Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4/1/04</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>42.25</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/2/04</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32.00</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>74.25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Tie Games (date)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tie Games (date)</th>
<th>Positive Comments A</th>
<th>Negative Comments B</th>
<th>Positive Comments C</th>
<th>Negative Comments D</th>
<th>Column Inches</th>
<th>Back Cover-Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4/4/04</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>43.75</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>43.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Content Analysis  
Data Set X (610-WIP Radio Recordings)

The researcher obtained the following data through a content analysis of Philadelphia’s 610-WIP sports radio recordings. The recordings consist of 30-minute excerpts of call-in shows following winning, losing and tied Flyers games throughout the season. The researcher used a representative, 25 percent sample of the recordings for the content analysis—10 winning games, eight losing games and four tied games.

Like the content analysis of the *Philadelphia Daily News* articles, the researcher used intercoder-reliability tests for the 610-WIP content analysis. Coders determined if the articles a) favored the team, b) criticized the team or c) made suggestions to improve the team. The amount of airtime devoted to Flyers and non-Flyers discussion was also measured.

The coders deemed the following words and phrases, or their derivations to describe the comments for the 610-WIP recording. The researcher used this list as a guide in completing the content analysis for the 610-WIP recordings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comments criticizing team</th>
<th>Comments favoring team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>out shot</td>
<td>great job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mental block</td>
<td>outstanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poor play</td>
<td>go Flyers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>choppy play</td>
<td>confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cannot do…</td>
<td>magnificent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>must do better</td>
<td>good position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poor puck handling</td>
<td>awesome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gave up</td>
<td>solid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not finishing</td>
<td>depth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>missed</td>
<td>good coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poor power play</td>
<td>versatile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not getting job done</td>
<td>skilled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>didn’t show up</td>
<td>good power play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frustrating</td>
<td>defended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>got beat</td>
<td>all-star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>terrible</td>
<td>good organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can’t...</td>
<td>made the plays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waste</td>
<td>showed up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blind</td>
<td>outplayed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brutal</td>
<td>out-shot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>typical</td>
<td>sacrifice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>were outplayed</td>
<td>defended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>couldn’t keep up</td>
<td>on their toes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no teamwork</td>
<td>good puck handling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lost it</td>
<td>supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Data Set XI (610-WIP-WINS ONLY)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Winning Games (date)</th>
<th>Comments Favoring Team</th>
<th>Comments Criticizing Team</th>
<th>Suggestions to Improve Team</th>
<th>Comments Favoring Team</th>
<th>Comments Criticizing Team</th>
<th>Suggestions to Improve Team</th>
<th>Minutes Devoted to Flyers</th>
<th>Minutes Devoted to Non-Flyers Subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11/1/03</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/13/03</td>
<td>Used</td>
<td>for</td>
<td>coding</td>
<td>sample X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/8/03</td>
<td>Used</td>
<td>for</td>
<td>coding</td>
<td>sample X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/30/03</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>(11%)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/16/04</td>
<td>Used</td>
<td>for</td>
<td>coding</td>
<td>sample X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/24/04</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>(12%)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/25/04</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>(6%)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/10/04</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>(10%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/12/04</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>(9%)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/14/04</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>(8%)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/3/04</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>(18%)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/5/04</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>(9%)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/9/04</td>
<td>Used</td>
<td>for</td>
<td>coding</td>
<td>sample X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/20/04</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>(10%)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>119</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>93</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>212</strong></td>
<td><strong>98</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"What happens in the fall doesn't mean a whole hell of a lot in the spring."

"Even though they won I still have a problem with this game."

"You can't even get Flyers fans to call after a game has just ended in South Philadelphia anymore—boy, the world has changed in the Philadelphia sports scene."

"After away hockey games, in the years I've been working here, we never get calls. It seems like no one watches hockey when the Flyers aren't at home."

"Simply a great and entertaining game to watch."

"There's nothing more dramatic than listening to a penalty shot on the radio."

"I believe because I play the lottery, and if I can believe that, I've got to have a little faith in the Flyers."

"It reminded me of when hockey was fun. Don't be embarrassed, people like the fights."

"Jeremy Roenick is the John Wayne of hockey."

"Unless you think this team is really setup to win the Stanley Cup, don't be disappointed."
Interpretation

Like the Philadelphia Daily News, the content analysis of 610-WIP sports radio’s after-game shows illustrates that media coverage decreases as team performance wanes. The total amount of airtime devoted to Flyers-related subjects after winning games (212) outweighed the same coverage following losing games (149). This again might substantiate the review of the literature, which indicated that sports fans do not want to hear about their teams after they have just lost—the “CORF” tendency.

In contrast, the amount of coverage devoted to non-Flyers subjects, most often about other Philadelphia sports teams, increased after Flyers losses (98 minutes after wins compared to 111 minutes after winning games). Once again, this might illustrate that the “CORF” tendency compels the host, who sets the show’s agenda, to introduce topics for discussion unrelated to the Flyers after the team has just lost.

Interestingly, the “BIRG” tendency seems more pronounced in Flyers fans, i.e. the callers, than it does in the host(s). There were more comments from callers favoring the team than from the host after winning games (119 to 93). This might be because the host feels compelled to be more unbiased in their assessment of the team, or perhaps because of their long association with Flyers discussions, they might have become bitter as far as the team’s lack of recent championships. Similarly, the host made more critical comments about the team than callers did (15 to nine). Again, this might be due to host cynicism about the team’s success, which also might have influenced their reluctance to offer suggestions to improve the team.

Callers were twice as likely to offer suggestions to improve the team as the host (seven to 14). Callers might feel that their suggestions would really benefit the team
whereas the host, because of his long experience with these suggestions, feels that none of the suggestions are heeded and are therefore meaningless.
**Data Set XII (610-WIP-LOSSES ONLY)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Losing Games (date)</th>
<th>Caller</th>
<th>Host</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comments Favoring Team</td>
<td>Comments Criticizing Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/22/03</td>
<td>Used</td>
<td>for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/13/03</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>8 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/18/03</td>
<td>Used</td>
<td>for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/3/04</td>
<td>5 (19%)</td>
<td>4 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/13/04</td>
<td>3 (11%)</td>
<td>5 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/18/04</td>
<td>6 (22%)</td>
<td>7 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/2/04</td>
<td>5 (19%)</td>
<td>8 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/17/04</td>
<td>Used</td>
<td>for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/19/04</td>
<td>21 (7%)</td>
<td>14 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/29/04</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>7 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/25/04</td>
<td>3 (11%)</td>
<td>11 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation**

Similar to the data following winning games, similar caller/host trends continue after losing games with the exception of critical and favorable comments. In contrast to winning games, where the host(s) made more critical comments about the team, there...
were a few more critical comments from callers than from the host after losing games (64 to 60).

This might be because fan frustration exceeds host frustration regarding poor Flyers performance. That is, the host(s) might have become more “hardened” to poor performance than the callers might because of their long, professional association with the team. For instance, because the host(s) interacts with the team on a daily basis, either by reporting on it or through fan interactions, they might be able to see that the game is “just a game” and not that important—essentially, they are more cynical than callers. Therefore, the host(s) might see the futility in making suggestions whereas callers might feel they are actually contributing to his team’s likelihood of future victory. (Callers made 24 suggestions after losing games compared to the host’s 10.)

Interestingly, host(s) made fewer favorable comments about the team after losing games than the callers (38 to 27). Again, this might be because the host(s) does not see each loss as a measurement of the team’s potential whereas callers might feel that each loss shows that the team cannot succeed in playoffs. That is, because of the host(s)’ long association with the team, they sees each loss as “just as loss,” and not the end of the world as fans might see it. Therefore, the host(s) might be less eager to start blaming and criticizing the team than callers because they are more unbiased in his appraisal of the team than callers and see that the team might have just has an off night.
### Interpretation

Like losing games, the same host/caller trends are evident after tie games. Callers made fewer favorable comments after tie games than did the host(s) (15 to 19), made more critical comments about the team (15 to nine) and offered more suggestions to improve the team (eight to two). This phenomenon might be because fans interpret tie games similar how they interpret losses—neither is desirable.

In comparison, the host(s) might understand that in the big picture, one point after a tie game is better than no points after a loss, whereas callers might feel that only wins will ensure future success.
Data Set XIV (610-WIP- Cross Comparison)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Caller</th>
<th>Host</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comments Favoring Team</td>
<td>Comments Criticizing Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winning Games</td>
<td>119 (74%)</td>
<td>9 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Losing Games</td>
<td>27 (17%)</td>
<td>64 (74%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tie Games</td>
<td>15 (9%)</td>
<td>15 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation**

Overall, callers clearly gave more favorable comments following winning games than they did following losing games (119 to 27). Again, the “BIRG” tendency might compel callers to relive the glory of the team’s recent win by calling and sharing their beliefs with their fellow fans. In comparison, the host(s) made more favorable comments after losing games than callers did. This might be because of the host(s)’ ability to distance themselves from the team and understand that in an 82-game season, one loss does not mean a great deal.

However, host(s) made more critical comments about the team after wins than callers did. Like their ability to understand that with hockey’s long season, each game does not mean a great deal, host(s) might also feel no need to make many favorable comments after winning games—especially during the regular season.

While little separated the total number of favorable and critical comments made by callers and the host(s) after both winning and losing games, there was a great variance in the number of suggestions between the two groups.
Callers made 27 more suggestions to improve the Flyers than the host(s) did (46 to 19). This might be because of callers’ close relationship with the team. As indicated in the review of the literature, fans with strong relationships with teams feel more obliged to make suggestions to improve their favorite team than fans with weaker relationships. Presumably, the callers offering suggestions have a strong relationship with the Flyers because they are calling into a radio sport show—it makes sense that fans with weak relationships with the Flyers would not take the time to call and offer their opinions.

In addition, because of the host(s)’ long, distanced relationship with the Flyers stemming from their professional relationship with the team, they might see the futility of making these suggestions more than callers do. Moreover, the host(s) might be reluctant to offer their suggestions in fear of setting the show’s agenda too much and quelling the opinions of callers. For instance, a host(s) that forcefully states that the Flyers need improvement might inhibit callers from stating that the team does not need improvement because the caller might not want to feel ridiculed on the radio.
Interview with Philadelphia sports journalist
Data Set XV (Transcript of Interview with Ed Moran)

The following question and answer section was conducted with Ed Moran, the Philadelphia Daily News’ Flyers beat reporter, on February 12, 2004. He authored the Daily News articles used in this study’s content analysis.

1.) When a hometown sports team is losing, do you feel compelled to go “lighter” on them because they’re from Philadelphia?

EM: No, you must do your reporting objectively. It doesn’t become difficult due to relationships with people like you would think. Fans and the team expect you to tell it as it is. They know if you’re sugarcoating your reporting.

2.) What particular story line do you focus on when a hometown team is losing more games than it’s winning- poor coaching, player talent, bad officiating, etc.?

EM: I just focus on the causes of the losses—that’s it.

3.) Do you cover a Philadelphia team any differently than an out-of-town team?

EM: No, not at all. I never do that.

4.) Do you think other Philadelphia sports journalists are biased in their coverage of Philadelphia sports teams?

EM: No breeds of journalist, including Philadelphia journalists, ever cater to the fans of their city’s team.
5.) Does the stereotypical “Philly Fan” image ever consciously influence your writing? That is, do you ever feel you have to represent the reputation of the Philadelphia sports fans?

_EM:_ Every city's sports journalists are basically the same except in Canada and Europe where they are biased to their teams. Philadelphia's reporting style is like any other city's.

6.) In your opinion, what is the single most important thing a sports team can do to improve its relations with the media?

_EM:_ They could be more open with information—especially about injuries. Holding back on information makes the job of the journalist more difficult. It also becomes more difficult when a team is losing. The availability and willingness for the management and players on losing teams to talk to you is worse than when they're winning. It becomes difficult, but sports teams need the media.
The following question-and-answer session was conducted with Zack Hill, the Philadelphia Flyers Senior Director of Communications.

1.) What is your biggest challenge in attracting positive media coverage?

ZH: In PR in the sports world it's different. It's not like if you were a PR director for IBM or something where you'd have to be more proactive, here the media come to us. So it's pretty easy. If you mention Jeremy Roenick's going to be somewhere or John LeClair, the media show up, so it's a pretty good bargaining chip to have. If you're a member of a pro sports team and you've got some marquee players out there, trust me, people will come—meaning media.

2.) Does the team's performance influence your public relations efforts?

ZH: No, they're (media) still going to come to practice and cover you, but the stories will be negative. The story is going to be "why are they struggling," so you'll get the same amount of media attention, but it won't be positive.

3.) How do you attract and maintain fan interest when the Flyers perform poorly?

ZH: When things are going bad, you'll try to come up with other things to ease it. So if we're struggling, might be we'll have a public appearance somewhere, take some guys to the hospital or something. I don't want to say we try to divert the media's attention, but if we're doing bad and they're writing bad things about us or negative stuff about us, we'll do other things to help out.
4.) From a public relations standpoint, what do you remember as being the most exciting incident or occurrence because you began with the Flyers?

ZH: There are certain things I’ve done like taking athletes to children’s hospitals around Christmas time to see the little kids’ smiles that have cancer that aren’t going to be able to get home for Christmas or Thanksgiving or whatever holiday we go. Things like that I’m proud of and that’s probably one of the highlights—get one of these guys who are labeled as role-models by society and have them put smiles on kids’ faces.

5.) Conversely, what was been the worst or most destructive public relations problem because you have been with the Flyers?

ZH: One that sticks out in my mind was about four or five years ago, I got a call at 3 a.m. from Paul Holmgren, who’s the assistant general manager, letting me know that there’s a Russian defensemen who’s a rookie named Dmitri Tertyshny. He was up a Cologne in British Columbia at a power skating clinic and he was out on a boat and he was out on the bow of the boat and he fell forward and the boat ran over top of him and the propeller just opened up his chest and sliced his throat and he died within 60 seconds. I called Clarke that morning and he gave me all the information and I called the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the staff sergeant who was on duty there when the EMTs arrived and basically it was a very long day and a very sad day in Flyers history because he was an up-and-coming promising rookie. One minute he’s having fun on a boat and the next minute he’s on the boat dying in their hands—the two guys he was with.
6.) In your opinion, what is your biggest fear or what would you least like to see happen as far as something causing a Flyers public relations crisis with fans?

ZH: I feel fortunate because hockey players are just so cool and so easy to deal with. I'm not just saying that because I'm the PR director for the Flyers, but I've talked to all the guys, the media guys, the TV people, the radio announcers, the print guys—they've all the said that out of all the athletes to deal with, hockey players are the best.

7.) How do you feel about the relationship the team has with the local media?

ZH: I don't think the media are fair in their assessment of the team all the time. I would like to see more accountability—this is for the writers because sometimes if they don't know something, they'll assume. You learn in journalism 101 that when you're a writer, don't assume anything. You always check facts. All they have to do is call me, I'm available 24 hours a day, sometimes they'll assume and nine times out of 10, they assume wrong. You're not supposed to assume when you're a writer. You fact-check and sometimes that's doesn't happen so I'd like to see more of that.

8.) Do you feel the Flyers garner the amount of media coverage it deserves compared to Philadelphia's other sports teams?

ZH: Right now we're getting a lot of coverage, but obviously when we first start the season it's all Eagles—it's Eagles and the Phillies because they are still playing. So, basically at the beginning of the season, you've got the Sixers just starting out and the Flyers just starting out and then we're battling with Phillies and the Eagles for press coverage. Once that's gone, meaning the Eagles and the Phillies are done playing, then we're just competing with the Sixers.
With the Sixers, we’re all under the same umbrella, but with the Eagles it’s NFL. It’s the big one. Believe it or not, it has a lot to do with the time the game’s played and if we’re at home or on the road. If the Sixers are at home, they’re always going to get top billing. If we’re at home, we’ll get top billing. But, if the Sixers game ends before ours, they can send out a package together—already in a can. Sometimes it’s just a matter of timing. Hockey games are longer than basketball games and if we start at the same time as the Sixers, the Sixers games is over first, and the TV stations they put a package together, edit it and it’s already in the can. They (the media) just want to get the story done. If the Sixers outcome is before the Flyers, obviously they’re going to get it done, put it in the can and it will be the first story.

9.) Based on your experiences, what advice would you give other sports team public relations practitioners?

ZH: It’s hard to pick out one, I think it’s probably just a bunch of things, but I think that being a successful PR director, I think it’s pretty easy. I feel there are three components to being a successful PR director—No. 1 Common Sense, it’s not rocket science, No. 2 Getting along with others, it’s a great job and it’s a fun job, I haven’t used my alarm clock in 16 years because I like coming to work. And No. 3 just having an even temper, don’t lose your cool because people see you as a spokesman for the team and if they see you pulling your hair out they’re going to think you’re a scramble head. It’s not that hard. Those three things I’ve mastered and when you have those three things licked, everyday is a good day and I’m proud of everyday.
10.) What one thing, be it identity change, championship season, etc. would make your job easier?

ZH: Besides the Flyers winning the Stanley Cup, right now I hope Jeremy Roenick and Keith Primeau get back in the lineup if I could change that. I'd love to say there's something, but I can't think of anything. I could sit here and go on and on about how much I love my job because I really do and I don't know if there's anything I could change only because I have so much fun. If there's one thing, that's not a bad thing, is I spend too much time here because I love it so much. I wouldn't mind having more of a social life, but then again, I like what I do. I mean this is my social life, I like what I do.

11.) Do you think that hockey's 82-game season affects the quality or level of interest among hockey fans as opposed to a sport like football where fans view only sixteen games per season?

ZH: Most of our guys think that the season's too long. I don't have a problem with it. We have such a strong fan base. I mean, you come to any Flyers game you want and it's a packed house. So, do I think the season's length affects fan interest, probably not because if there were games that we're half empty, I'd think there's too many games. We pack them in consistently. We're always about 98 percent capacity. Do I think the season's long? I don't know, but I do know it's the shortest off-season of the four major sports—out of football, basketball, baseball and hockey. It is the shortest, but no, I think it's fine.
12.) How do you foresee next season's hockey season affecting fan relations as far as the possible strike and are there any special steps your department is taking now to offset the effects of the possible strike?

ZH: It's sad, we'll be directed by the league and right now there's not a whole lot we're doing. The league will send us out information and they have a website for it. They came out with that Levitt report, that's an independent study where an accountant found that the league lost $270 million last year. So, as of right now we aren't, but the league will direct once it gets closer.

13.) Do you foresee any changes in the way your department functions?

ZH: It's (the department) pretty much the same because I started here. I think things are going pretty well. I certainly hope there will be no changes.
Chapter 5
Discussion

Through qualitative and quantitative research, the researcher found that team performance does not affect fan support. Nearly all intercept studies' respondents (97 percent) state that they would not show any less support for the Flyers if the team were in last place. Therefore, because fan support depends on the success of a team, sports team's public relations departments can positively affect fan behavior regardless of team performance.

Fans indicate that the No. 1 fan-relations issue they would most like to see changed is the cost of attending a Flyers game. Respondents consistently feel that ticket prices for Flyers games are too expensive. Fans also indicate that fan-oriented activities and media coverage are not important in their relationship with the Flyers. Both of these items tied for least important.

Furthermore, fans state that in addition to the lowering of Flyers tickets, parking prices should also be lowered. Most fans say that concession prices at the Wachovia Center are not too expensive.

From a fan relations standpoint, Flyers fans want more contact with the players. The majority of respondents say that greater accessibility with their favorite Flyers would strengthen their relationship with the team. Fans indicate that management accessibility was second in importance to them with giveaways and contests being least important.
In addition to greater contact with the players, fans say they want a Flyers-only weekly TV or radio show. However, fans are not interested in having the players appear on existing talk shows or even increasing the amount of team coverage in the local news media.

Not surprisingly, team support is strongest among “diehard fans.” These fans consistently support the team after both wins and losses. Average” and “casual fans follow them in terms of support, respectively. Additionally, fewer “diehard fans” feel that the cost of attending a Flyers game is too expensive in relation to “average” and “casual fans.” Proportionally, more “average” than “casual fans” feel that the cost of game attendance is too expensive compared to “diehard fans.”

Also not surprising is the fact that the local sports media provides more team coverage after winning games than after either losing or tie games. However, because the Flyers won more games than it tied or lost, it makes sense that there would be more coverage of the team after winning games. However, the quality of coverage clearly improves as the team’s performance improves.

Additionally, an interview with a member of the Philadelphia sports-news media reveals that the Flyers do not provide enough information on injuries in a timely manner. The journalist feels that the team holds back information making the task of meeting deadlines harder.

Furthermore, the local news media provides more positive comments about the team (management and players) after winning games than after losing or tie games. This is true for both print and broadcast news media.

The qualitative and quantitative research substantiated the study’s two hypotheses.
**H1: It is expected that media coverage will decrease as a professional sports team’s performance decreases.** Fans will not want to hear or read about the poor performance of their favorite team; therefore, the media will not report on the team as much when it loses.

Content analyses of the *Philadelphia Daily News* articles covering the Flyers and 610-WIP recordings following Flyers games revealed that both the quantity of coverage as well as the quality of coverage dropped as Flyers on-ice performance waned. Again, because there were more winning games than losing games this season, the data might have been skewed by the team’s success this season. Nonetheless, the analyses show that there are more positive comments about the team after winning games than after losing games.

A question that arose during this study is if these same results would hold true for a team that performed poorly. For instance, would the proportion of negative stories to positive stories be the same for a team that performed poorly or did the Flyers success this year influence the amount of media coverage it garnered during the regular season?

**H2: A professional sports team’s public relations department can positively affect fan attitude even when team performance suffers.** According to Cialdini’s “BIRGing” and “CORFing” theory, fans will distance themselves from sports teams that perform poorly and seek ways to reinforce their bond with a team that succeeds.

However, the review of the literature indicates that the level of identification fans have with their favorite team determines how much satisfaction they derive from their roles as team supporters. Accordingly, sports team’s public relations departments can positively affect fan behavior if fans’ identification with their favorite team is strong; therefore, the
key to affecting fan attitude lies in the strength of fans’ identification with their favorite team.

Through intercept studies of Flyers fans during the regular hockey season, the researcher found most respondents indicate they have a strong relationship with the team, e.g. most fans identified themselves as “diehard fans.” Accordingly, it makes sense that these fans will support the Flyers regardless of the team’s success. Additionally, this makes sense because the researcher conducted the intercept studies at the Flyers practice arena, which attracts fans that seek to reinforce their relationship with the team, e.g. “diehard fans.”

However, all fan types, including “average” and “casual fans” state they will support the team even if it were in last place. Accordingly, sports team’s public relations departments can positively affect fan behavior even when team performance suffers. More importantly, sports team’s public relations departments can positively affect the behavior of all fans when team performance suffers—not just “diehard fans.”

Over 90 percent of “average fans” and 100 percent of “casual fans” state that they would support the Flyers even if the team were in last place. Therefore, because team performance does not influence fan support, sports team’s public relations departments can positively affect fan attitude even during losing seasons. However, the fact that the Flyers did perform so well during the regular hockey season might have influenced responses. That is, it might have been difficult for fans to assess how much they would support the team if it were in last place. Furthermore, the majority of all fan types state they identify more with this season’s Flyers team than last season’s team. These responses raise several questions.
First, would Flyers fans say they identify with next season’s team more than this season’s team if the study was replicated next year? Secondly, where fan responses influenced by the fact that the Flyers season was still ongoing during the time the researcher conducted the intercept studies? For instance, if the Flyers do not perform to fan expectations this season, i.e. win the Stanley Cup, will fans “abandon” their support for this season’s team and support next season’s team more in hopes that that season’s team will win the championship?

The preceding addresses a few of the problems that arose during this study—most notably, the great success of the Flyers and its effect on fan attitudes.

For instance, all fans, notably “average” and “causal fans,” might have become essentially “bandwagon fans” during the season leading them to overestimate their relationship with the team. Moreover, the Flyers success during the season might have influenced respondents’ assessments of their “fans type,” i.e. “diehard,” “average” and “casual.” That is, true “average” and “casual fans” might have identified themselves as “diehard fans” to keep from being label as “bandwagon fans” from true “diehard fans.”

For instance, with the increase in media coverage that winning teams garner, the notoriety of these teams increases, and in turn more fans might be “made.” However, because this study was conducted during an ongoing season, the researcher could not predict how the team would perform and therefore how that performance might influence the data, both quantitative and qualitative.

Nonetheless, as far as the intercept studies are concerned, because they were conducted at the Flyers practice facility, it makes sense that fans attending Flyers practice sessions truly are “diehard fans,” “average fans,” etc. and not simply “bandwagon fans.”
Therefore, it might be of use in future studies to conduct intercept studies at the team’s practice facility to ensure that the respondents truly are fans of the team. In addition, conducting intercept studies at sports teams’ practice facilities alleviates the burden of having to search out suitable subjects—if the subjects take the time to attend team practice sessions it makes sense they are fans and therefore the needed demographic. Moreover, if these respondents take the time to attend practices, it makes sense they would seek out other ways to reinforce their relationship with the team, i.e. attending games, purchasing team memorabilia, etc. In such a case, understanding these respondents’ wants and supplying them would help in ensuring the future financial success of the team.

In addition, this study’s choice of media for content analyses helped ensure that there would be an ample amount of material to study. Both the Philadelphia Daily News and 610-WIP concentrate on covering local sports teams. Future studies might also use similar media outlets that report heavily on the studied sports team. Additionally, it might be of interest for future researchers to gain access to the studied sports team’s public relations department to understand how the team puts public relations efforts into practice, during both winning and losing streaks. While interviews with the sports team’s public relations practitioners provide some of this information, the aforementioned research would provide data regarding the changes sports team’s public relations departments make in their efforts to affect fan behavior when the team is both successful as well as unsuccessful.

Despite the problems associated with this study, it would be of interest to replicate this study, especially with a losing team. Results from such a study might determine if this
study's results hold true for teams with losing records that have no chance for post-season play. In addition, it would be of interest to see if the results from this study, which focused on a professional hockey team, would hold true for other sports, be it professional, amateur, scholastic, etc.

Based on this study's data, the researcher presents the following advice and suggestions to increase the effectiveness of the Flyers public relations department's efforts.

- Reduce the cost of attending a game at the Wachovia Center.

  While it might be financially impossible to reduce the cost of attending a game with the present budget, there might be other means to ticket-price reductions stemming from the reduction of the team's fan-promotions budget. The data shows that Flyers fans do not feel that fan-oriented activities/promotions are important, therefore, the costs incurred in developing and implementing such activities could be used to offset the lost revenues resulting from a ticket-price decrease.

- Reduce the cost of parking at the Wachovia Center.

  While the majority of fans feel that ticket price reduction is the No. 1 improvement that the team could make to improve fan relations, many (58 percent) feel that the price to park at the Wachovia Center are also too high. Again, like a ticket price reduction, a decrease in parking costs would be financially feasible if the team management decreased its fan-oriented activities/promotions, thereby using the savings resulting from fewer promotions to offset parking price reductions.
• Create a Flyers-only weekly TV or radio show.

If the preceding two suggestions are not possible, then the fan-oriented activities/promotions budget would be better used to develop and produce a Flyers-only weekly TV or radio show. Since few fans (15 percent) feel that the Flyers’ current fan promotions/activities increase the likelihood of them following the team, the team should develop alternative fan activities/promotions. The money used for current fan-oriented activities and promotions should be used to produce a Flyers-only weekly TV or radio show. Possible media outlets include Comcast SportNet for television and 610-WIP for radio. Possible hosts include former and present Flyers or team-related celebrities such as Steve Coates. Behind the scenes stories of the team including road trips, team meetings, the pre-game rituals of players or players’ off-ice hobbies and interests might be highlighted during such a show. Additionally, such a show would also alleviate fans’ desires to increase player accessibility, which 57 percent of respondents say they want. Allowing fans to see the players as people, not just as athletes, might help strengthen their bond with the team.

• Ensure that injury reports reach the media in a timely manner.

Local sports media representatives routinely say that the Flyers do not provide enough information regarding player injuries for them to meet their deadlines. While it is true that, unlike other sports, professional hockey does not have to divulge injury status in a timely, or even accurate manner, to improve media relations with the team it would behoove Flyers public relations department to have at least some form of a statement for the news media as soon as possible. Such gestures might also increase the amount of
favorable coverage the team receives because reporters would not have "an axe to grind" with the team.

While the preceding suggestions/advice concern the Philadelphia Flyers, similar efforts might also benefit other sports teams. However, since this study's research deals only with Flyers fans, specific changes for other sports teams might require a similar study of their fans. For instance, a study of the New York Yankees might reveal that its fans like the team's current fan-oriented activities and promotions; therefore, changes to that team's activities might hurt fan relations efforts rather than improve them.
Bibliography


“The American Lynch Law.” 1 Jan. 2004 <http://www.louisville.edu/a-
s/english/haymarket/robertw/groupment.htm>

Associated Press. “Golisano will take Balanced Approach with Salaries.” ESPN.com 23 April 2003 1 Nov. 2003
<http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/print?id=1543671&type=news>

Associated Press. “Fan Allegedly Threw Cell Phone From Second Deck of Stadium.”
1541704&type=news>

Associated Press. “Findings will be Posted on Fan Website.” ESPN.com 10 March 2003

Associated Press. “Rising Player Salaries Mostly to Blame.” ESPN.com 19 Sept. 2003 1

Associated Press. “Lemieux: We Can’t Allow Pens to go Bankrupt Again.” ESPN.com 7

Associated Press. “War, Sluggish Economy Cited for Rise in Empty Seats.” ESPN.com
1546143&type=news>

Bonham, Dean. “Hockey Fans Love Their Sport, Survey Indicates.” Rocky Mountain
News 2 March 2002: 5C


176


<http://www/leagueoffans.org/sportsfans/index.html/>


Forsyth, Donald. “Group Dynamics.” 2 April 2002 7 Jan. 2004


Leedy, Paul L. Practical Research Planning and Design. Columbus, Ohio: Merrill Prentice Hall, 2001
Leifer, Eric M. “Perverse Effects of Social Support: Publics and Performance in Major


Louis Post-Dispatch 2 Nov. 2002: 18


“NHL Checks Ticket Prices.” CNNMoney.com 1 Nov. 2003
apt&expire=&ur1ID=7844723&fb...>

Oliver, R.L. “Conceptual Issues in the Structural Analysis of Consumption Emotion,
Satisfaction and Quality: Evidence in a Service Setting.” Advances in Consumer

2003/10/16/sports/7024680.htm>


E1


Pooley, J. “The Fan: A Social Psychology of Misbehavior.” CAPHER Sociology of
Sport Monograph Series (1978): 4

Richens, Marsha. “How Enduring and Situational Involvement Combine to Create
Involvement Responses.” Journal of Consumer Psychology 1: 143-153

Richens, Marsha & Bloch, Peter. “Post-Purchase Satisfaction: Incorporating the Effects


Snow, David & Oliver, Pamela. “Social Movements and Collective Behavior: Social


Figure 1 (Fan intercept study questionnaire)

Thank you for participating in this brief survey about the PHILADELPHIA FLYERS. Your opinions will be used as research for a graduate thesis about professional sports. 

For questions 1-3, please circle the appropriate answer.

1. Do you consider yourself a Flyers fan?  
   YES  
   NO

2. If no, please do not continue with this survey, thank you.

3. If yes, how do you rate your loyalty to the team?

   **DIEHARD**  
   (You view 75+ percent of games, remain loyal regardless of wins and losses, think your team is the best even if it’s in last place, know all players’ names.)

   **AVERAGE**  
   (You view 50 percent of games, know the names of the team’s star players, love the team when it wins- lose interest when it doesn’t.)

   **CASUAL**  
   (You view 25 percent of games, become most interested in the team when it makes the playoffs.)

For questions 4-6, please circle the answer that best describes your feelings.

4. Do you identify with this season’s Flyers team more than last year’s team?  
   YES  
   NO

5. Would you show less support for the Flyers if they were currently in last place?  
   YES  
   NO

6. Would you follow the Flyers more closely if the hockey season were shortened from its current 82-game schedule?  
   YES  
   NO

(MORE)
7. In what areas could the Flyers make improvements to increase the likelihood of you following the team? (Please rank in importance, 1 = least important, 2 = somewhat important, 3 = most important.)

___ Reduce the costs of attending a game

___ Have more fan-oriented activities/promotions

8. In EACH block, please rank which items you would most like to see happen. (1 = least important, 2 = somewhat important, 3 = most important)

**BLOCK A: COSTS**

___ lower ticket prices

___ lower parking prices at the Wachovia Center

___ lower concession prices at the Wachovia Center

**BLOCK B: FAN RELATIONS**

___ provide greater player accessibility

___ provide greater management accessibility

___ sponsor more giveaways and contests

**BLOCK C: MEDIA COVERAGE**

___ have more player appearances on radio and TV talk shows

___ have a Flyers-only weekly TV or radio show

___ provide more Flyers coverage on local TV news/local newspapers

(More)
9. (optional) What else could the Flyers do to increase the likelihood of you following the team? (please explain) ____________________________________________

For questions 10-13, please mark the appropriate answer.

10. What is your gender? _____ MALE _____ FEMALE

11. How many Flyers games do you view per season?

   _____ 1-10
   _____ 11-30
   _____ 31-50
   _____ 50 +

12. How many Flyers games do you attend in person per season?

   _____ 0-10
   _____ 11-20
   _____ 21-30
   _____ 30 +

13. What is your age?

   _____ 18-28 _____ 29-39 _____ 40-50 _____ 51-60 _____ 61+

Thank you very much for your time, your assistance is greatly appreciated.
In-depth interview questions: Flyer's Public Relations Personnel

1.) What is your biggest challenge in attracting positive media coverage?

2.) Does the team's performance influence your public relations efforts?

3.) How do you attract and maintain fan interest when the Flyers perform poorly?

4.) From a public relations standpoint, what do you remember as being the most exciting incident or occurrence since you began with the Flyers?

5.) Conversely, what was been the worst or most destructive public relations problem since you have been with the Flyers?

6.) In your opinion, what has been the biggest change in the way the Flyers run their public relations department this season as opposed to last season?

7.) How do feel about the relationship the team has with the local media?

8.) Do you feel the Flyers garner the amount of media coverage it deserves compared to Philadelphia's other sports teams?

9.) Based on your experiences, what advice would you give other sports team public relations practitioners?

10.) What one thing, be it identity change, championship season, etc. would make your job easier?

11.) Do you think that hockey's 82-game season affects the quality or level of interest among hockey fans as opposed to a sport like football where fans view only sixteen games per season?
12.) How do you foresee next season’s hockey season affecting fan relations as far as the possible strike and are there any special steps your department is taking now to offset the effects of the possible strike?

13.) Do you foresee any changes in the way your department functions?
**Figure 3.**

**In-depth interview questions:** Philadelphia Daily News Sports Journalists

1.) When a hometown sports team is losing, do you feel compelled to go “lighter” on them because they’re from Philadelphia?

2.) What particular story line do you focus on when a hometown team is losing more games than it’s winning- poor coaching, player talent, bad officiating, etc.?

3.) Do you cover a Philadelphia team any differently than an out-of-town team?

4.) Do you think other Philadelphia sports journalists are biased in their coverage of Philadelphia sports teams?

5.) Does the stereotypical “Philly Fan” image ever consciously influence your writing? That is, do you ever feel you have to represent the reputation of the Philadelphia sports fans?

6.) In your opinion, what is the single most important thing a sports team can do to improve its relations with the media?