

Section XIV

Strategic Communications

A. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

The Strategic Communications Office (the “Office”) of the Penn State Athletics Department (the “Department”) plays a significant role in enhancing the Penn State brand by telling, facilitating and documenting the Penn State Athletics story broadly to internal and external audiences. The Office closely collaborates with other units to create, update and distribute content and information for GoPSUsports.com, social media platforms, media organizations and broadcast partners. The Office often acts as a primary liaison between the University and the Department, members of the media and the public. The Office is responsible for assisting the media with interview and information requests and providing access to the media to enhance exposure for Penn State’s 31 varsity programs and the Department.

A. Media Interviews

The Office staff should arrange all media interviews for coaches, although it is not a requirement. Coaches are strongly encouraged to keep the Office advised of their media schedule and should not make substantive announcements without first consulting the Office staff member that works most closely with the team. Coaches should discuss with their primary Communications contact the merits of a press conference for significant announcements and the participants.

All student-athlete interviews shall be coordinated by the Office to ensure that the interview topic is appropriate, that NCAA time management regulations are followed, that the student-athlete does not miss class or practice time due to a media interview and that appointments are held and concluded in an appropriate amount of time.

Requests for all student-athlete media interviews must be made by the Office staff at least 24 hours prior to when the interview would be conducted in order to comply with NCAA time management regulations and provide preparation time for the interview.

The Office staff does not provide cell phone numbers of coaches or student-athletes to the media. A coach may give the team’s primary Communications contact permission to provide his/her cell number to a media member in certain circumstances.

Coaches are encouraged to arrange a pre-season meeting at which the team’s primary Communications contact addresses the team to cover media responsibilities, social media best practices, provides training on relationships and appropriate responses with the media and answers team members’ questions on traditional and social media matters.

B. News Releases

The Office staff prepares media releases and event recaps on all 31 Penn State teams, with some of the information provided by coaches and student-athletes. It is essential that such material be accurate, relevant and distributed to the appropriate audiences. The cooperation of coaches is essential to the successful completion of the Office’s mission.

The media should not, at any time, be informed of departmental or team developments before they are made available to the Office staff. Questions concerning what is appropriate for formal or informal release should be discussed in advance with the sport's primary Strategic Communications contact or the Associate Athletic Director for Strategic Communications.

C. Event Coverage

Due to limited resources, the Office cannot staff all home and away varsity events. In establishing priorities, the Office will take into account the anticipated media coverage, the resulting local, regional and national interest and impact, as well as the available staffing resources and cost of coverage.

Coverage of home events are the top priority. Road contests, particularly those with championship implications, will be covered as staffing and budgets allow. In cases where Office staff is not available to travel, staff will post and distribute coverage of the event after communicating with a coach on the trip. Cooperation with the media is essential for coverage of road contests in instances where media members are not expected to attend.

Media credentials for home events are issued by the Office, which will have the sole discretion in evaluating applications for media coverage.

D. Locker Room Access

The Department maintains a closed locker room policy following all regular-season events, with limited exceptions. To ensure equal access for all media, coaches and student-athletes are brought to a separate interview area defined in advance of the particular event.

In the closed locker room setting, it is essential that coaches and student-athletes cooperate with the Office staff to make themselves available for post-game interviews. Coaches are requested, when necessary, to assist in encouraging reluctant student-athletes to appear in response to requests by the Office staff or media.

For selected post-season and championship events that require an open locker room for the media, at least one member of the Office staff will be present in the locker room throughout the open period and keep the team and media apprised of when the locker room will close and ensure all media promptly depart.

E. Historical Records

The Office staff is responsible for maintaining and updating historical records for all 31 programs and the Department. It is essential that coaches and student-athletes provide match results and biographical information in order for the Office staff to update statistics, team and individual records and produce biographies for GoPSUsports.com and the team's media guide or online yearbook.

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