

# Media Relations Services

The Athletics Media Relations Office at Washington State University is designed to assist Cougar student-athletes in all phases of dealing with the media. Listed below are rules, suggestions, and procedures important to you as a student-athlete at WSU.

Remember that members of the media are **assigned** to report on Cougar athletics and all those people associated with the programs and teams. They are not paid to be cheerleaders. Most, but not all, are supportive of WSU's programs and the student-athletes and coaches involved. Still, it is not their job to make you look good. How well you conduct yourself at all times will go a long way toward developing your reputation. "Fans judge you as an **athlete** according to how you perform during competition. They judge you as a **person** according to how you perform with the media. If fans develop a good impression of you through the media, especially when things are not going well in competition, the benefits to you can be significant" (*NFL Media Relations Handbook*).

WSU places a high priority on media relations. Because sports fans locally and nationally will know as much through your relationship with the media as they will through your competitive efforts, WSU asks you to do interviews and work with the media when requests have been made by members of the media.

Making yourself available for interviews is important for several reasons. First, you benefit. You learn skills of communication that will be an asset forever. Second, your team and program benefit from the exposure. Third, the fans who help support our programs become more committed and involved because of media coverage. An equally important impact of your relationship with the media and your willingness to do interviews is the impact it will have on young people who, in the future, will consider attending WSU either as a student or a student-athlete. You learned about WSU through coaches and student-athletes who competed before you. Now the next generation of Cougar student-athletes will learn from you.

If you are uncomfortable when talking with members of the media, work with your representative in the media relations office. Staff members can help you feel more comfortable and help you take charge.

## Media Relations Functions

- Media Representatives—the staff serves as representatives to all members of the Athletics Department, from coaches and administrators to student-athletes.
- Archives—the office records and stores all information dealing with the NCAA/Pac-10 athletics teams competing for Washington State University.
- Statistics, Event Results—all individual and team statistics are compiled by the media relations office for all competition involving Cougar teams.
- Home Events—staffing home events and hosting visiting members of the media.
- Publications—WSU publishes press guides, event programs, and a variety of other material, including the Cougar Athletics Foundation magazine *Butch's Beat*.

- Photographs—all photographs taken by our photographers are property of the WSU Athletics Department and are filed in the media relations office; these include head and shoulder photos, game action photos, and other miscellaneous photos that are available to local, regional, and national publications including your hometown papers, to your high school, and to fill special requests. If you bring a re-writable CD to our office at the end of your season, we will copy all digital photos onto that disk for you to keep.
- Honors—office personnel work with national organizations and publications to make sure all WSU student-athletes receive appropriate regional and national honors and recognition.
- Internet—information provided by WSU is now available through many Internet sites, providing a link directly from Cougar Athletics to fans worldwide. Our website is ***www.wsucougars.com***.

## **MEDIA TECHNIQUES**

**All** interviews by members of the media are coordinated through the media relations office:

- Student-athletes are asked to only grant interviews when they have been pre-arranged by a member of the media relations staff.
- **Do not take calls at home** from members of the media **unless arranged through the media relations office**.
- An attempt will be made to handle all interviews between 8 a.m. and the end of your daily practices.
- You will **not** be asked to **miss a class** to do an interview.
- Remind members of your family (parents, etc.) they may be contacted by members of the media; they are not obligated to conduct these interviews, especially in times of trouble and conflict. Please ask them to not give out your phone number here at WSU.

## **Interview Do's**

- Organize your thoughts about a question before answering it.
- Speak in short, complete sentences; this is especially helpful for radio and television interviews; this also helps to make sure you are not misunderstood.
- Be human, be yourself, be honest. Many of you have fascinating stories to tell of your life away from the competition; don't be afraid to talk about those stories.
- Praise teammates—there are many other people who help make you a success.
- You are a celebrity; expect to lose some of your privacy. You are not treated the same as other WSU students. You will receive a lot of attention for your athletics endeavors; because you are a celebrity, you also receive attention for your mistakes inside and outside athletics.
- Look good; be confident but not cocky; keep your head up and look the person in the eye when answering. Be humble in victory and gracious in defeat.

- Ground rules—know what will be discussed in advance; the person arranging the interview from the athletics media relations office can tell you what the subject matter will be; don't be afraid to tell a reporter you don't want to discuss a certain subject.
- Be animated—lively sports figures are the most quotable.

### **Interview Don'ts**

- **You are always on the record. Never speak “off the record” to a reporter;** expect everything you say and do to be used by the reporter if not now, eventually.
- You are live—assume anytime you can see a camera, microphone, or reporter note pad that you are being recorded.
- Phone calls should be considered on the record and live from the time you pick up the receiver to when you hang up; do not relax and think what you are chatting about will not be reported—it will.
- Be alert; when reporters are around, don't say or do anything you would not want reported, printed, or put on the air.
- Don't play referee—don't whine about an official's call; avoid such references as “he blew the call” or “that was a bad call.” You will sound like a cry-baby.