



American Volleyball Coaches Association

<http://www.avca.org>

Working with a National Coaches' Office

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Table Topic Session - Publicizing Olympic Sports (at 2001 CoSIDA Convention in San Diego, Calif.)

For sports information contacts, establishing a good working relationship with national coaches offices can play a key role in how a school's athletic program is viewed. How a school interacts with such national offices can affect the amount of national exposure is generated for a team. Below are topics that can help cultivate such a relationship, and at the same time, help you promote your own student-athletes and coaches.

*** The national coaching office as a media outlet of its own.** Many national coaching offices publicize their sport and member institutions in many of the same ways as a newspaper, magazine or on-line site. For instance, the American Volleyball Coaches Association produces in-season division-specific weekly newsletters, a bi-weekly electronic newsletter, a bi-monthly magazine, a central location for weekly results, national polls, players of the week and a full array of web-based media and news stories. Each school's participation enhances the media functions of the coaching organization.

*** Know prior to the season starting what is expected from the national office.** Several national coaching organizations (American Volleyball Coaches Association included) send out detailed SID packets to each school to help the sports information staff prepare for the upcoming season. The packet details items such as score reporting, deadlines for the entire season, various ways to submit newsworthy articles and photos (electronically preferred) for publications, information on national polls, player of the week nomination process and post-season awards nomination forms. If questions still exist, call the appropriate person at the national office. Waiting mid-way through the year to have questions answered does not help your school (coaching staff and SID office) or the national coaching organization.

*** Establish on an institutional basis the amount of support the sports information office will provide to the national coaches office.** What this does is immediately sets up a line of communication between the coaching staff and sports information office on the role each will play toward the coaching organizations. Some institutions may elect to have the sports information office handle all the media relations topics such as results reporting, news reporting and player of the week nominations. Some institutions may elect to have the coaching staff perform the extra duties within their coaching organizations such as post-season nomination forms (although many SIDs currently fill out the nomination forms because of the statistics needed). Coaches at some schools elect to perform all such duties knowing that the SID office is already overwhelmed with other sports. Some schools elect to view coaches' organizations as the responsibility of the coach to fulfill requests. In contrast, some sports information offices perform all the duties, freeing up the coaching staff to coach. In short, the first key is the line of communication on campus as either the coach or SID may think the other is handling certain chores to service coaching organizations. The AVCA perspective is that each school should have "institutional autonomy", that being we do not want to direct a school on how to do their jobs. Each school is different, from personnel to philosophy, and we respect that in the decision making process.

*** If the sports information office takes on the duty of filling out post-season nomination forms, become familiar with the forms at least a month in advance.** Some information on the forms may not be readily accessible at the 11th hour prior to the deadline. However, reading over the forms and seeing what is needed will not only help avoid such traps, but also save time when it comes to fill out the form. Look for ways to save time where areas can be duplicated (school name, address, region, coach/administrative staff, etc.). The American Volleyball Coaches Association has been able to help the process by providing the form in a Word document and allowing computerized statistics in place of stats typed directly on the form - both time saving measures.

*** Realize that the national office staff implements projects and tasks based on directives from the coaching membership.** If change is sought from a sports information contact, the best way to accomplish such a mission is to voice concern with the school's head coach (if a member of the coaching organization) and to the national office. From there, the national office can bring the item to the proper committee for possible change. At times, methods of performing a particular task to help the SID can be changed. Hence, voice your concerns to the national office, whether through yourself or your coach. That is how change occurs. At times, though, the national office staff will not be able change a task/project because of reasons tied to other projects.

*** Conference offices can play a major role with a national coaching organization.** Conference offices represent anywhere from five to 18 schools, and a national coach's organization encourages them to participate in promoting their members. A coaching organization can sift through lots of information generated from a conference office representing multiple schools in a short amount of time. Thus, this benefits not only the conference, but also the schools it represents.

