

# Best Practices in Athletic Communications



2011 ECAC-SIDA Workshop

[rpiathletics.com/BestPractices](http://rpiathletics.com/BestPractices)

# RPI™ Staying Organized Professionally & Personally

AMIE CANFIELD, Rensselaer

- There are a number of ways an SID can get burned out or overwhelmed. One way to keep games, projects, meetings, work-study students and my life balanced is with a personal planner.
  - The space it has for notes, game-day events and contact info is invaluable in making certain of what is going on tomorrow or the week or month after.
- Utilize a large desk calendar that allows the same function.
- A Google calendar gives you the ability to check your schedule and even cross-reference it with others to make certain of what's going on.

# Write It Once



## GENE McGIVERN, St. Thomas (Minn.)

- When you compile a team or individual note or short story remember to cut and paste it into a place where you can quickly access it from home or the office.
  - With more nomination forms going online, it's wise to save a copy of those nomination bios before you submit
    - Often the same information can be used for other nominations, conference notes, game-day stories, website notes and stories, and media story pitches.
      - Player batting streak, school-record performance or team hot streak



# Get Many Eyes on Written Material

JEFF BERNSTEIN, NYU

If you have the luxury of time, don't be afraid to let others proofread an important document. Nothing that's ever done is perfect. The more people that look at things the more errors that can be found and corrected BEFORE the document becomes public.



# Working Ahead

JASON BRYDEN

Washington College

- There are things you can do to make the most of your time.
  - Work ahead when it comes to game programs, weekly reports and/or setting up games.
    - In the Centennial Conference, many times all-conference, sportsmanship and academic honor roll are provided ahead of time
      - Write that up and be ready for the go ahead to release it.

# Statistics Research

GENE MCGIVERN

St. Thomas (Minn.)



- With more statistics and information now archived online (NCAA record books, for example), it's easier to research stat trends and see if they yield a note, factoid or story idea that you can promote.
  - In about one hour from home, I was able to check the NCAA record books, scroll through D-I, II, and III softball and baseball data, and confirm how rare our school's streak of eight consecutive NCAA playoff trips in both softball and baseball is
  - Not always earth shattering news but research that can lead to notes or stories for use on our own websites and become nuggets that outside media love.
    - Often these are projects you can assign to a student worker to research, too.



# Game-Day Press Release Template

DAVID ALEXANDER  
Saint Rose

You can always set up some of your game story press release in advance, especially parts of the agate and the upcoming opponent for each team.

- This will help reduce your postgame workload



# Updating Senior Bios

JASON BRYDEN

Washington College

- This can be extremely beneficial for both student-athlete, coaches and the athletic staff.
  - Student-athletes can use this to show their achievements that they earn as a senior
  - Coaches and athletic staff can use this for information down the road
    - Such as consideration for Hall of Fame.



# Archiving

GEORGE GAGNIER

Geneseo

- I use three-ring binders for hard copies of all rosters, results, box scores, season stats, post-season honors, etc.
- These binders are organized by sport
- Makes finding information on historical questions easy.



# Keeping Paper Files

JASON BRYDEN

Washington College

It's a good idea to have a backup in case something bad were to happen.

- The all-time records (opponent-by-opponent and season-by-season) are in binders along with releases and box scores.
- The records are printed off after each season and put in the binder.
- Can be great for when other athletic staff wants to look up historical info
  - They can borrow the binder to conduct their research.

People can find out quickly the history of Athletics this way.

# The Use of Gmail



JON KING, Alvernia

- We keep an [alverniasid@gmail.com](mailto:alverniasid@gmail.com) account for postgame releases
- Contact management through gmail has far exceeded what Microsoft Outlook has afforded us.
- Anyone in the office can copy and paste a story into a gmail email.
- Often had to get game files sent to gmail because campus mail was down.



# Blogs for Athletics Websites



## JUSTIN ZACKAL, Westminster (Pa.)

**Do you have something to share that is not exactly news release worthy, but you or your coach would like it shared online?**

I've found success integrating a blog on our athletics website that is used as a vehicle for non-traditional content.

- We highlight family connections, alums who are coaching or competing elsewhere, athletes' other activities, and much more.
- We also found "Athlete Diaries" useful in telling the student-athlete experience that is more subjective than stat-laden news releases and box scores.

We do this all without flooding sports editors' in-boxes with news releases or diluting the space online used for news releases.



# Flip Video Camera

CHRIS O'DONNELL, UMass Lowell

Although it adds a little more time to our postgame routine, it is a tremendous feature to our website for pre- and post-game interviews and catching bits of action.

# YouTube Channel for Events

JON HOLTZ, Slippery Rock



- While many of us have YouTube channels set up for our athletic departments, I got a surprising amount of traffic when I made separate channels for events we hosted.
  - For example, we hosted the conference track championships, and made a channel for it.
    - Over a five day stretch, we got over 5,000 video views.

# Video

DAVID ALEXANDER

Saint Rose



- Make the potential for video a part of any media pitch.
- You can always send along YouTube links out to accompany any stories you may do.



## Photo Shared Drive

CHRIS O'DONNELL, UMass Lowell

- It's a bank of photos accessible to whomever we grant permission in the athletic department
  - Coaches and administrators can access photos and video without our help.
- It is a valuable archiving tool
- It is part of our Virtual Private Network (VPN), which enables us to access it from anywhere

# Find a Student Photographer

JON KING, Alvernia



- Spend a portion of your usual photography budget on a "prosumer" level camera
- Teach a student how to use it (or recruit from the school paper).
  - They get excited about using equipment they will probably never own
  - Who cares if they shoot 1,000 photos and you can only use five?

# Cross Training

DENNIS O'DONNELL, Rochester



**Early in the year, I move students around.**

Student A does the score sheet, student B the clock, etc. The next time, Student A may do computer input. I have a group that can multi-task and I don't have to worry about filling the spot of the computer inputter, for example.

For basketball, my staff will work one scrimmage (two periods).

- My returning clock operator trains someone new on the clock for the first 10 minutes. Vet runs it, newcomer watches. Then they switch.
- After that period, vet clock operator moves to the scorebook, shot clock operator moves to the scoreboard, and so on.

I can fill in with someone else without a drop-off in performance.



# Keep Student Workers Organized and Efficient

JEFF BERNSTEIN, NYU

It's imperative that you keep your student workers focused on the tasks at hand by planning their responsibilities in advance and keeping up with them during the process.

- If something needs to be corrected, it gets done early in the process so change can be made quickly and efficiently going forward.

They are the LIFE BLOOD of our operations.

# Organization of Student Staff

DENNIS O'DONNELL, Rochester



Rather than have a 'football crew', a 'soccer crew', etc., I strive for a large group of students - usually 15 to 16. On a week with home events, I canvass the staff to say 'these are events we are hosting and this is what I need for each event [PA, clock, stat input, etc.]. Who can work?' This way, there is flexibility - events get covered and a student doesn't have to fret because their class runs until 4:15 on Wednesday and there's a soccer match at 4.



## Statcrew Practice

### DAN NOLAN, Monmouth (III.)

- Because I have new help for Statcrew every year, training has become an annual event. Instead of practicing live during a scrimmage, I tape the appropriate sport and then our crew can work on spotting and keying in the game.
  - Now it's on tape, and we can go at a pace that is comfortable for everyone
    - Stopping it when we need to or letting it run if we get on a roll

# Audio, Video & Live Stat Links

MIKE WARWICK, Ithaca



- Send an email to the visiting school's SID with links to any coverage you have for your home game
  - Don't wait for them to ask you if there's any coverage



# Think of the Visiting SID

LYLE FULTON, TCNJ

- When a school is at your place for a contest and the SID is not traveling, make sure you get them the file/html/pak as soon as possible after the game.
- They can't start their work until they have that and it is even more important if you don't utilize live stats.
- It's a simple thing that you are going to do anyways, just be mindful of who else needs that information.



# Post-Game Procedure

## STEVEN MILLER, Worcester State

- The best thing you can do is to send out your box score to your media constituents right away.
- This reduces stress levels and gives you more time to work on the game story at your own pace, even when its a busy Saturday when you have five different events going on at the same time.
  - Sending out the box score at 9pm when the deadline is at 10-11pm, the newspaper already has the information they need.
  - At the very least, they can put in a line-score and/or box score with the information you've sent them ahead of time.



## Sending Statcrew Files

### MIKE WARWICK, Ithaca

- When you send a Statcrew file to the visiting school's SID, put the score of the game in the subject line
- The visiting SID now has the score without having to download, unpack, import and look through the game file
- There are a bunch of things you can do right off the bat with the score that you don't need the whole game file

# Tweet Final Scores

ANDREW CATALON, WNYT

Everyone checks Twitter these days. It's great to have that information right on your phone and/or computer.





# Cell Phone Numbers

DAVID ALEXANDER

Saint Rose

Be sure to have cell phone numbers of all media members in your market.

# Make a Phone Call Immediately After the Game with a Final Score

ANDREW CATALON, WNYT

The recaps and game summaries are helpful, but the biggest help is to talk to someone after the game ends to receive instant information.



# Tying High School/Hometown to Players Name

## RICH BECKER, WXXA

- On first reference to a player, use his/her name, school, and hometown. It is something that our department really appreciates.
- With the volume of information to be reviewed every night, it helps identify local athletes and spotlight them on TV or on the web.
- Often times, if this is not done and we don't recognize the name on first glance, the information gets ignored due to volume.
  - John Smith (Draper H.S./Rotterdam)



# Be Cooperative & Friendly

[KEN SCHOTT, The Daily Gazette](#)

I think it's important for a reporter to show up at a game and not treat it like a job. I always try to talk to the staff running the game-day operations, and my fellow colleagues covering the game. With some press boxes a bit cramped, sometimes there isn't room to move around. You have to be a bit patient if you don't have much elbow room. It makes covering a game much more fun.



## Experts

DAVID ALEXANDER

Saint Rose

- Make the media aware of contact information for any "experts" you may have working in your department that may be useful as a potential source.
  - For instance, if you have a coach who is on a rules committee; he/she may be available for comment on any story regarding such within your market.



## Hirings

### MIKE WARWICK, Ithaca

When you write and post a release about a new hire, send a copy to the new coach's alma mater and to the schools where he/she has worked.

# Reaching Out to Hometown Papers



AMIE CANFIELD, Rensselaer

- One way to keep hometown media up-to-date on student-athletes from their circulation area is with hometown releases.
  - It gives the newspaper an idea of what student-athletes are accomplishing throughout their season
  - It can spark interest in future stories or mentions
- Timeline
  - Send out the first wave a few games into the season
  - Send again in mid-season
  - A final wave at the conclusion of the season

# Think of the Hometowns



LYLE FULTON, TCNJ

- With the way the media has changed to a more electronic version, don't forget about the hometown papers.
  - Smaller papers are looking even deeper for stories to run to combat the online media.
  - Include small papers on media distribution lists so they can track athletes from their area more closely
- Success in generating features by doing so.



# Finding Hometown Media

DENNIS O'DONNELL, Rochester

## Rely on two websites...

1. Mapquest to find the town where the student is from.
2. Hometownnews.com: This has a listing - by state - of every newspaper in the state.
  - Find a paper in the town that aligns with the student's hometown (from Mapquest).
    - Open that paper's website.
      - Usually near the bottom, there is a link titled CONTACT US.
        - » It will typically provide an email link for the editorial side
          - Either direct to sports, or just to general news (for smaller papers).
            - Use that link for your release.

Some papers have an in-house email link - a version of form-mail. You can either paste your release here, or write to the paper, saying you have an athlete from their area and you would like to send a release. Where should you send it? The papers are usually pretty good about replying.



## Hit their High Schools

### DAN NOLAN, Monmouth (III.)

- Whenever one of our student-athletes receives a conference or national award, we write the usual press release. In addition to sending it to their hometown papers, I also send it (with a photo) to their high schools.
  - Many of the high schools actually post the release and photo.
- It's a great way to get the college's name out there while also touting our student-athletes.



# QR Codes

JON HOLTZ

Slippery Rock

- QR, or Quick Response codes, are a quick and easy way to direct people to various types of information.
  - SRU puts them in all of their game programs as direct link to live stats feed.
    - Scan the code with your phone → Taken to live stats
      - Featured on CoSIDA site this year.

# Using RSS Feed to Post Stories to Twitter and Facebook

MEGAN HARDIN

Southwestern (Texas)



I use the RSS feeds from our website to post stories to our Facebook and Twitter accounts.

This way, I don't ever have to manually do it. The stories go up shortly after they are posted new to the main page of our website.



## Keep it Positive

LYLE FULTON, TCNJ

There are times when teams don't have the greatest days. Pick out a highlight that encourages your student-athlete.

- A baseball team may have lost 10-0, but Joe Smith had a solid game, going 3-for-4.

# Game Programs

TOM McGUIRE

Bloomsburg



- For all our sports, except football, we wanted to have a new cover picture for each game. I worked with our print shop a plan that I can now submit our programs 24 hours in advance and have them ready the next day.
- The covers, now in color, can be changed every game.
  - It helps keep our look fresh
  - The student-athletes like it since more of them get a chance to be on the cover.



# Senior Close-Up

JIM SHEAHAN, Bard

- When we were planning our new web site, I knew that if every story I wrote for the site was based solely on athletic results, it might not be such a fun site to visit.
- I decided to create a feature that would focus more on the academic life of some of our senior athletes - and I checked GPAs first to make sure I was interviewing great students.
- I do a 30-minute interview and arrange to take a photo of the individual in an environment related to their studies. I've written one about every three weeks or so, and according to our web traffic, these are the most widely-read stories on our site (by a longshot).
- They have nothing to do with athletic success and everything to do with academic success and future plans.

I get more feedback about these features than I do about anything else up on our new web site.

# Keeping Fans Informed



AMIE CANFIELD, Rensselaer

- Not everyone who visits your website will spend the morning going through every sport that competed to find out what happened.
  - Use a Weekly Review & Preview, which begins the Monday prior to the first game of the season and concludes after the last sport has finished
- Content
  - Brief summary of what happened for each team over the past week
  - Look ahead to what is happening in the upcoming week.
  - Allows inclusion of links to live stats, audio and video sites



# Schedule Regular Fitness Appointments

KENT CHERRINGTON, Plymouth State

In this business, if you wait until you feel like working out, it won't happen. In the fall and spring, I schedule racquetball games like I would schedule a meeting, and when the time comes, I drop what I'm doing and go to the racquetball courts. The work is always there when I return. I also go skiing almost every Tuesday in the winter. It's a great way to get exercise and get out of the office and keep my workload under 60 hours.



# Get Out of the Office!

JEFF BERNSTEIN, NYU

Make sure you get out of the office at some point(s) during the day.

- Lunch
- To meet with others within your university
- Just take a walk around campus

Everyone needs time out of the hustle and bustle of our office environments.

- Clear your head for projects your working on
- Think about things outside of work that need to be taken care of

People cannot live by work alone.

# Discussion



2011 ECAC-SIDA Workshop

[rpiathletics.com/BestPractices](http://rpiathletics.com/BestPractices)