

Club Publicity Guide

BC Summer Swimming Association

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SWIMMING | DIVING | WATER POLO | SYNCHRO

Club Publicity Guide

Each club needs an enthusiastic publicity person to develop an effective public relations program. Publicity about the team in newspapers, magazines, radio and television will attract valuable local interest. Sports reporters, writers and broadcasters are always looking for three things:

- ✓ Good Sports news
- ✓ Human interest stories
- ✓ Interesting tidbits

Organizing a campaign to deliver news and timely information is the first step in setting up an effective media relations program. This is followed but a lot of practice, persistence and patience. Remember that you are competing with other sports for publicity space. Make sure that the news releases you send are newsworthy, because sports editors receive several each day and do not have time to read trivial releases.

9.1 Philosophies with the Media

Before you present your story to the media, be sure you have all the necessary information and the details to support it. This eliminates wasting your time and the reporter's. If you are not sure of an answer to a question, tell the reporter you will call later... then follow through. Always remember that anything you say to a reporter can be printed.

Remember to sell swimmers, not swimming. The real story of swimming is the people involved in the sport. From volunteer officials, to the coach and of course the swimmer, virtually all-swimming stories are "who" stories. Remember this rule and the rest of the job as publicity chairman will fall into place more easily.

Getting Started

Develop as list of media contacts and include the name, address, phone number, sports editor, or reporter assigned to swimming, and deadline information. It is important to keep this information updated.

Ensure that any member you wish to write a story on have given their consent as it relates to the story and to ensure that you are not breaching the BCSSA Privacy Policy.

Develop and maintain a photo library for your team. Begin with existing photographs. Line up a team photographer; this can be a student, parent, friend or anyone who is handy with a camera.

Prepare an accurate calendar of events that your team will host and participate in during this season; for example: clinics, camps, local and out-of-town competitions and Championship meets. Send a calendar to your media contacts once it is published and stick to it.

Legwork

Get to know your Team.

What are the specialty events of each member? What are the individual and team goals for the season? Are there any strong rivals? Most of the information can be easily obtained from the coach or swimmers.

Be Prepared

Once you are prepared with the ability to communicate, personally visit the media representative in your area.

Introduce Yourself

Let the media know who you are and tell them about your club, its athletes and activities. Develop a good relationship with your media contact and educate them about swimming.

Find out the type of information your contacts want. Know when they would like it, and in what form it should be presented. For instance, a newspaper may need the meet story complete with results and photographs immediately following the competition, while the radio would only need the highlights.

Be Timely

Old news is no news! It will neither be put in print or on the air. In the event that an error appears in a story, NEVER berate the reporter or the editor. Politely point out the problem and offer to help in the future.

9.2 Types of Releases

There are two kinds of news releases to develop in publicizing any activities:

- ✓ The advance announcement
- ✓ The event story

The Advance Announcement

The advance news release previews an upcoming event and is designed to stimulate media interest in that event. The information distributed to the media should include:

- ✓ Name of the host and/or sponsors, site, dates, and times.
- ✓ Pertinent facts such as proper name of the event, participating teams and top athletes with highlights of any significant accomplishments.
- ✓ Names of any guest celebrities and VIP's who may either be competing or participating in the awards presentation, clinics or opening ceremonies.

The Event Schedule

Distribute the advance announcement seven to ten days prior to the event. This will give the editor time to designate space for your story. Distribute a follow-up announcement two or three days prior to the event and follow-up with a phone call. An offer of any additional information or good story angels can help the coverage of the event. Requests of the newspapers for photo coverage should be outlined, in writing or by phone, a week ahead of time.

Remember to know whom to ask for when you are calling any media outlet.

The Event Story

The story gives an actual chronological account of the event. As the story is unfolding, it is wise to note highlights, record results, check statistics, and gather information from interviews so the story can be written immediately following the event.

Be able to augment the story with details of past records and participants. The story and supporting materials must be available to phone, deliver, or mail to the media according to scheduled deadlines. If it is late, the story will not be used.

“Remember: Old News is No News”

9.3 Helpful Hints

The results of a meet should be recorded at least through third place in each event with any record performances duly noted.

Although the media will probably mention only the winner’s times, the additional information will better portray the depth of the competition and perhaps prompt an unexpected story later.

Review interesting possibilities for photo coverage and pictures ahead of time. Large newspapers may send a photographer along with a reporter to cover the event, while smaller newspapers, magazine and periodicals will appreciate the offer of a good black and white picture to complement their stories.

Be prepared to coordinate photo assignments and provide captions accurately identifying the people and the activity being photographed.

9.4 Promotion Pointers

Create Awareness

Approach TV and radio stations for guidance developing public service announcements (PSA’s). When well done, much more can be accomplished through PSA’s than a one-time mention on the sports segment of a news program.

The number of media you approach reflects the amount of coverage you receive and know the Sports Director and PSA Director at each station.

Don't Be Afraid to Ask

Request dates on TV and radio interview shows for publicizing a clinic, Swim-A-Thon or Championship meet. This can be especially effective if you are able to secure the services of a prominent sports figure in your community for an endorsement.

Don't Be Intimidated

Contact newspaper feature editors and columnists with various human stories that can be built around club activities or members.

Read the paper to see who is writing this sort of thing and how they cover it. Remember that sports writers and editors do not live in Ivory Towers. They want to be in touch with the various components of sports within their communities.

Have Fun

Create imaginative contests for banners and posters. These promotional aids can be used to publicize activities and also to decorate club sponsored events. Offer prizes to participating individuals, clubs and/or groups. Remember, there is always one more great idea and always remember to say "Thank-You".

Cement future relations with the media, guests and others who have given their assistance by extending your club's hospitality, a memento of appreciation, and genuine thanks for a job well done.

Preparing the News Release

Each news release competes with many others for the eye of the editor; so the better it is written and presented, the better the chance it has of being printed. Accuracy, newsworthiness and timeliness are the three most important aspects of a news release. Be accurate and check facts and spelling of names and events. Limit stories to those with genuine news value. "Fluff" releases don't get printed and they diminish the value of any subsequent releases, no matter how important they are. Deadlines are the most important aspect of the newspaper work. Know in advance what deadlines must be kept and meet them. Never keep an editor waiting.

The earlier the story is in the editor's hands the better. For best results, follow these basic rules of presentation:

- ✓ Type it on the computer and double spaced.
- ✓ Be neat and always use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation. Double check spelling of names.
- ✓ If the news is to be printed when issued, release instructions should specify this. (i.e.: For Immediate Release)
- ✓ A timely reminder should be sent to follow-up any specifically timed release.
- ✓ If the news release is more than one page, write "-more-" at the bottom centre of the page. This is a simple journalist's term to tell that the release continues.

Writing the Story

Put an action verb into the title of a story to catch the eye of the reader, and think in terms of this action verb as the story is written. Passive voice verbs are boring, while the active voice verbs bring the story to life.

Determine the key facts: the who, what, when, where, why and how. The story should begin with what is called a "lead" and it should contain the most pertinent of these key facts. Keep the lead simple, direct and concise and let other interesting details come out in the succeeding paragraphs in their order of importance.

Develop the story angle. A "who" or personal angle story is much more likely to be printed than a "what" story.

A Few Basic Rules of Journalism

Use short, tightly written sentences and paragraphs. Use action verbs and avoid passive "to be" verbs.

Write informally, using terms familiar to the average reader, avoid jargon and slang. Stay away from "swim speak", the language of the sport of swimming, i.e.: negative split, died, coming home etc.

Use actual dates; not today, tomorrow, etc. and be sure to be factual. NEVER offer personal opinion.

Proof read the copy and double check all facts, names, titles, addresses, and time references. Ask yourself if the true story is compelling as written. If not, fix it so that it becomes more interesting.