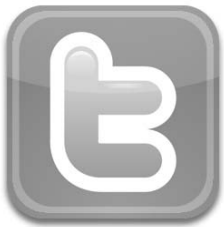




ATHLETIC COMMUNICATIONS HANDBOOK

CBS SPORTS
NETWORK



ESPN
THE WORLDWIDE LEADER IN SPORTS



DAILY @ NEWS



The New York Times



TIMES HERALD-RECORD

ARMY OFFICE OF ATHLETIC COMMUNICATIONS (845) 938-3303

639 Howard Road (first floor entrance, in back of building)

• **Bob Beretta, Senior Executive Associate Athletic Director**

Office: 845-938-3303; Cellular: 914-490-5034. Primary contact for football

• **Brian Gunning**

Office: 845-938-6871; Cellular: 914-755-0389. Primary contact for football and men's basketball

• **Christian Anderson**

Office: 845-938-6929; Cellular: 845-554-6023. Primary contact for men's soccer, swimming and diving, wrestling and baseball

• **Tracy Nelson**

Office: 845-938-4090; Cellular: 914-755-7764. Primary contact for volleyball, women's basketball and lacrosse

• **Mady Salvani**

Office: 845-938-3512; Cellular: 848-565-0505. Primary contact for women's soccer, gymnastics, rifle and softball

• **Ryan Yanoshak**

Office: 845-938-7198; Cellular: 845-403-1130. Primary contact for golf and hockey

• **Pam Flenke**

Office: 845-938-6996; Cellular: 860-888-6971. Primary contact for cross country, sprint football, indoor track and field, outdoor track and field, women's tennis and men's tennis

INTRODUCTION

A Guide to Success for the West Point Cadet-Athlete and Coach

"Fans judge you as a player according to how you perform on the playing field. 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 on the field, the benefits to you can be significant."

—NFL Media Relations Handbook

As a cadet-athlete or coach at the U.S. Military Academy, you will be exposed to the largest media market in the nation. One of your responsibilities here at West Point is to cooperate with the media. To assist you in your dealings with the media, the Army Office of Athletic Communications has prepared this handbook for you.

You should view your obligation to cooperate with the media as a chance to promote your team, yourself, your sport and the U.S. Military Academy. It is important for you to develop a good working relationship with the media. Our best advice is to try to develop a better understanding of the media and the job they are trying to do.

Army's Office of Athletic Communications serves as the link between West Point cadet-athletes, its coaches and administrators AND the media and general public. We attempt to provide timely and accurate coverage of Army athletics by coordinating interviews, servicing the information needs of reporters and compiling and maintaining statistics.

We do NOT "manage" the news or publicity. We are NOT part of the media, and we do NOT (and can't) write or speak for the media.

Media attention also means your conduct both on AND off the field or court will be under intense scrutiny because of your position as a West Point cadet-athlete or coach. The last thing you want is to receive publicity for an off-the-field incident. You must **ALWAYS** remember that your off-the-field actions are viewed by the media as relevant news, while a non-athlete or coach's activities may not be viewed in the same manner.

Army athletes benefit from tremendous local, regional and national exposure. And the U.S. Military Academy has an outstanding reputation of positive media rapport over the years. Therefore, it is important to understand the media, the value of positive media relations and how best to deal with the media. That's the purpose of this handbook. Please spend some time reading through it, and keep it handy throughout the year.

The primary way for Army's fans to find out

about you and for you to communicate to Army's fans is through the media.

The stories of Army's teams, athletes and coaches are told to the fans on a daily basis throughout the year by thousands of newspapers, magazines, radio stations, web sites, blogs and television stations.

As an Army athlete, one of your responsibilities is to cooperate with the media just as giving 100% on the playing field and in the classroom are your responsibilities. It's all part of the package of being a West Point cadet-athlete.

Athletes at the U.S. Military Academy have many more opportunities than those at other schools to do media interviews because West Point is a nationally prominent institution with an unparalleled athletic heritage situated just outside the world's largest media market, New York City.

Most of you have probably done media interviews during your high school career. How much you deal with the media at Army will depend on a combination of your personal success and that of your team.

The media's role is not to be a cheerleader for you. However, you'll find that the more cooperative you are with them, the better chance you will have of the media presenting positive stories about you.

Seeing the media as the enemy only hurts you, not them. At the very least, good relations with the press makes them less inclined to crucify you if you drop the ball or strike out.

The acceptance of an athlete, team or institution by the media is developed by the impressions made through an interview or feature story, as well as by the way the athlete conducts himself or herself.

It can't be stressed enough that media attention also means that your conduct both on and off the field will be under intense scrutiny because of your position as a West Point cadet-athlete. The last thing you want is to receive publicity for an unfortunate off-the-field incident.

WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

Magic Johnson, former NBA star:

"The way you're perceived, that's everything. Athletes take it too lightly, but your image is very important. Especially if you want to get into something after your career."

Paul Tagliabue, former NFL commissioner:

"If you understand the media's role and prepare yourself properly, your relationship with the media can pay big dividends... Learning how to deal skillfully in this area can result in tremendous benefits during your playing career and long after it has ended. Take advantage of the opportunity."

Norm Charlton, former major league pitcher:

"If there weren't writers, cameras and microphones in the clubhouse, then we wouldn't be getting paid what we're paid. The media is part of the goose that laid the golden egg. Stories create interest, and that's how fans get involved. Our job is not just to play baseball."

NFL Playbook: "Reasonable cooperation with the news media is essential to the continuing popularity of our game and its players. Please recognize that each member of the media, like you, has a job to perform. It is important to you and your team that you present yourself to the media in a manner and style in which you yourself would like to be received and treated."

Kathleen Hessert, ex-TV news anchor and current media coach for athletes:

"What makes one athlete stand out over the other is the ability to communicate. It draws fans or loses them. It creates sponsorship value or wipes it out. Good communication can mold an image. Athletes have to learn to harness the media to promote their value. Look at (seven-time Olympic gold medal swimmer) Mark Spitz. He won seven gold medals, but talent won't carry you alone. His endorsements dried up quickly because he didn't communicate. Athletes are willing to drill over and over to get to a level of excellence in their sports, and if they apply the same dedication with communication, then they'd be outstanding. But most don't make it a priority, and that's why those who do stand out so much."

THE MEDIA

Just what is and who are the media? How do they operate?

The following is an in-depth look at the types of sports journalists representing national, regional and local media with whom you may come into contact during your time as a West Point cadet-athlete:

Beat Writers: These newspaper writers cover Army on a daily basis, so they are a key link between Army and our fans. Primarily, they report the facts in an objective way. While beat writers may become the most familiar members of the media to you because of the amount of time they spend with us, they still must remain independent and impartial. Besides writing postgame stories, they constantly seek to uncover interesting human interest (feature) stories about Army athletes. Most beat writers have blogs and Twitter accounts as well. Blogs are used for short, breaking news stories, as a follow-up to previous pieces or stories that just could not make it into the newspapers.

Columnists: Newspaper columnists can be more subjective than beat writers, injecting their own opinions and viewpoints into stories. It is a creative form of sportswriting. You might not always agree with what a columnist writes.

Wire Service Reporters: The Associated Press is continuous digest of breaking news. Their writers send out short, capsule stories nationwide as soon as an event is over. Many of the nation's smaller media outlets rely on the wires for most of their sports news.

Television News Crews: Although you likely won't see reporters and camera crews from the local television stations as often as newspaper beat writers, don't overlook their impact. Most people get their news from television instead of newspapers. But because most sports segments on TV newscasts last less than three minutes, sports anchors mainly read scores and show game highlights. Time permitting, they'll air snippets of an interview. TV crews might come out to practice or show up in the locker room after a game to do interviews, some might do live interviews and some might just shoot action footage for their newscasts.

Photographers: Photographers for newspapers and magazines, and television video camera operators, must tell their stories visually. You'll see them on the playing field at games, and possibly in any designated interview area afterwards. So, while you must be judicious in your comments, remember that your actions can also be captured both digitally and on video.

ITT KNIGHT VISION: One of the many platforms, the Army Athletic Association provides for our fans is ITT Knight Vision. The feature stories, game recaps and interviews are shown on the official Army Athletics web site at www.goARMYsports.com.

Television Game Broadcasters: If a game will be televised either live or tape delayed, count on seeing announcers (both play-by-play and color analyst) during the course of the week. They'll come out to view some of your practices and, along with the TV producer and director, might want to meet you informally the day before the game. They might also want to do a brief taped interview. Obviously, you should not discuss game strategy in detail, or share confidential team information. However, if you make a good impression and share some useful information (funny stories, interesting insights about yourself or teammates), they'll talk positively about you and your team. Also, as soon as the game is over, you might be asked to do a quick live interview with them.

Radio News Sportscasters: Like their television counterparts, those who broadcast sports news on the radio have limited airtime. It's mostly a score service, but at times you'll be interviewed by a radio sportscaster after a practice or game.

Radio Talk Show Hosts: Sports radio talk shows, featuring calls from fans, have become very popular. It's possible you'll be asked to be a guest on one of these shows. Most of the interviews are done live over the phone.

Radio Game Broadcasters: All of Army's football games many of our other sports events are aired live on the radio. You might be asked to do a taped pregame or live postgame interview with the play-by-play announcer or analyst.

Magazine Writers: Most sportswriters who work for magazines are looking for feature-oriented stories. Their deadlines are not nearly as tight as those of newspaper writers.

Campus Media: The U.S. Military Academy has various campus media outlets, most staffed by fellow cadets. These include the Pointer View, WKDT-Radio, the Howitzer yearbook and other assorted publications. While these journalists are your campus peers, we have always treated them like any media member and have extended them every professional courtesy.

Greg Aiello, NFL communication

director: "It can be difficult at times, but the media presents an opportunity to do something for yourself and your team."

Brooks Robinson, Hall of Fame base-

ball player: "Don't fight the media. This is a mistake. The media doesn't close doors. It helps keep doors open."

Don Bryant, former Nebraska sports

information director: "It's amazing to me to see kids come in as freshman who can barely talk or are shy, and see them go out as seniors who can really talk to the media, enjoy it, joke with them, and say the right things. There is an educational value to it."

Angelo Dundee, Muhamad Ali's

trainer: "These reporters are your friends. This is what it's all about. They want to talk to you. Always respect that. Because when they stop talking to you, then you're a dead issue."

NFLs "Winning the Media Game A

Guide for NFL Players: "Being cooperative when dealing with the media is part of your job. Win them over by being cooperative."

YOU CAN ANSWER QUESTIONS IN ONE OF FOUR WAYS:

1. Directly and immediately (yes or no, and why)
2. After taking time to think
3. Not at all, but you must explain why, as in, "I don't know the answer" or "That's personal"
4. Don't answer the question as asked (if the question is negative, bridge to a positive answer)

A word about **deadlines**. Just as your sport might have a clock that winds down, many members of the sports media have to keep an eye on the time. Most newspapers require their writers to submit their stories by a daily 10:30 p.m. deadline.

Wire services and radio news have almost instantaneous deadlines, while television news crews must put their segments together for the early evening and then the late evening news. So time and accuracy is of the essence for journalists. Keep deadlines in mind. When the media is seeking access to you after a practice or game, visit with them as soon as possible.

Now, a word about **headlines**. The sportswriter who interviewed you didn't write the headline for his or her story or the caption under the picture; an editor wrote them after reading the story. So don't blame the writer for a less-than-complimentary headline the next time you see him or her!

INTERVIEWS

The main way you will deal with the media is through interviews. Most interview topics are about your team and yourself.

Interviews should be looked at as part of the leader-development program offered at West Point, helping you foster communication skills that can assist you not only in the classroom, but in the U.S. Army and future professional and business careers.

The more interviews you do, the better you will become at handling them and the more fun they will be.

We encourage you to make yourself available to the media, especially because cadet-athletes have been tremendous representatives of the U.S. Military Academy.

We ask the media to direct all interview requests through the Office of Athletic Communications. We will contact you and work around your cadet, academic and athletic schedules.

In many cases, we will arrange evening phone interviews from the barracks. In these instances, the reporter will call you at an agreed-upon time, or you will be asked to place a phone call. On other occasions, you will be asked to come to the Office of Athletic Communications to be interviewed in person or conduct a phone interview.

If several members of the media have requested interviews, we'll sit them down with you at the same time to help you save time.

In addition, following the conclusion of games, coaches and athletes are expected to make themselves available for interviews within a reasonable period of time (generally after a 10-minute "cooling off" period). These postgame interviews occur in various forms: a press conference in front of a group of media, a one-on-one interview with a single reporter, or a live interview on radio or television.

Listed below are tips to consider when doing media interviews:

- Ask the purpose of the interview before granting it and let the reporter know if there are subjects that are off-limits. You have the right to know something about both the reporter and the subject matter. You don't have to do an interview, but there is a nice way of saying, "No."

- Show up on time for all interviews. Don't stiff the media. If you agree to an interview, be there. If not, you'll get the interview off on the wrong foot.

- The most important thing to remember in dealing with the media is the real audience. You may be speaking to one reporter, but the real audience for your remarks is the thousands, or even millions of fans who will read or listen to your comments.

- Your goal with the media should be to put yourself and your team in the best possible light with the real audience the fans. You can do this by delivering a positive message no matter the circumstances. When you win, don't be arrogant and cocky. It's a turnoff to fans. When you lose, don't criticize others. The fans easily forgive mistakes made on the field. They don't easily forgive a bad attitude.

- Remember, this is your interview so plan on doing about 50 percent of the talking. Avoid "yes" and "no" answers.

- Think before you speak. If you don't want to see it in print or see it on TV DONT SAY IT! Always remember the adage: **"Say it today, see it tomorrow."**

- It's perfectly fine for a journalist to ask any question, no matter how much it might offend you. You can't control the questions, but you can control the answers. Think carefully before answering a question. Think about how it will affect others. Always remember that you choose how to answer a question, or whether to answer it at all.

- Anticipate tough questions and prepare answers beforehand. Don't be caught off-guard. Pause and collect your thoughts. If you fell before the finish line or missed a free throw with no time to play, be prepared to talk about it. You'll earn more respect from the media and the public if you talk after losses or bad performances.

- Don't talk negatively about others. Follow the rule that if you don't have something nice to say, don't say anything at all. Speak positively about teammates, coaches and the U.S. Military Academy and about opponents. Think before you speak, particularly about the long-range ramifications of what you say. For example, talking negatively about an opponent could come back to haunt you and your team. You don't want your comments put up on an opponent's locker room bulletin board.

- Don't let negative questions lead you down the wrong path. You must learn to form a bridge from a negative question to a positive answer. For example, after a tough loss, someone might ask, "Do you think the coaches got too conservative with the play-calling in the fourth quarter?"

John Heisler, Senior Associate Athletic Director, Notre Dame: "Athletes live in a fishbowl. A lot of athletes don't realize the impression they make for themselves and their school with the way they handle an interview."

Buck Rodgers, ex-California Angels manager: "Deal with the press by keeping a very simple strategy in mind. When writers come to me, I always remember they have a job to do, so I try to give them a pearl. Somebody told me that the one thing you don't want is to let a sportswriter write his own story."

Tom Friend, Basketball Times: "The bottom line is those of us in the media tend to treat athletes exactly the way they treat us, and the reason the media is rubbing Magic Johnson's back right now is because he treated us like Fresh Princes. So, now that he's got the HIV, I'm supposed to rip him?"

Ronnie Lott, Hall of Fame safety: "Part of our job is giving interviews. It's not necessarily something you want to do at certain times, but it's part of the job. It comes down to being professional."

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Hall of Fame basketball player: "Dr. J never refused an interview. Anytime, anyplace, ever. I could never do that. But he probably had the best relations with the press and public of anyone in professional basketball. And it's helped his career and his outside interests enormously. He's an example of how to cope with maybe the toughest problem in the NBA: dealing with the media. If Dr. J is the best example, I'll give you the worst - me. At least near the beginning of my career, before I learned some important lessons. In high school and college, my coaches hid me from the media. I think maybe they should have done with me what they were doing at other schools. They made players available in a controlled situation."

Marv Levy, ex-Buffalo Bills head coach: "I don't think players realize a comment they make is interpreted in greater depth than the depth of thought they gave before making the comment."

Cindy Schmerler, USA Today: "(The late) Arthur Ashe listened patiently as one reporter after another began interviews with, Arthur, how has your life changed since you revealed you have AIDS? Instead of becoming annoyed, Ashe varied his responses, giving each a fresh sound bite for the evening newscast."

INTERVIEWS

Even if you think they did, you know the coaches won't appreciate your public criticism, and the fans don't like players who blame others for a defeat.

You must bridge to a positive answer, for example: "I don't worry about the play-calling. Our job as players is to get the job done. Any play will work if you execute. We didn't do it this time. We'll just work harder to get it right next time."

What impression does that kind of answer make? A positive one. The fan would think, "Hey, that's a first-class, stand-up kind of guy. I like him."

Also, be wary of reporters who pose the same question in similar manners. In some cases, reporters will attempt to "bait" a player or coach into responding to a question in a way that best serves his or her story. In these instances, reporters will not be satisfied with the answer produced by the person they are interviewing and will rephrase the same question in different words.

Stick to your guns! A good opening line when facing this situation is, "As I said before..." You should then repeat your original response.

- You will be more effective if you take the offensive with the media in a positive manner. It starts with being prepared. Prepare your thoughts in advance, take a deep breath and relax.

- Be colorful. Be likeable. Show personality. Avoid jargon and acronyms. Use simple words, familiar to both you and the reporter. Avoid using the same word multiple times during the course of a sentence or interview. Show diversity in your vocabulary.

- The ideal answer summarizes key messages, corrects inaccuracies and expands the message with examples, figures and visuals.

- Always speak slowly and clearly. Project your voice. Sound confident and sincere. Maintain eye contact with a reporter and be natural.

- Call a reporter by name, if possible. It is common courtesy, and it helps to demonstrate you are in control of the situation.

- Be honest in your replies, but also realize that you have the right to protect your privacy. When possible, steer the reporter to topics you want to talk about, keeping the emphasis on the positive, rather than the negative.

- Do not feel obligated to answer every question. Do not feel intimidated in the face of difficult or unclear questions that you are not comfortable answering. Defer answering questions when outside your personal knowledge, experience or expertise. If you're asked a question of a sensitive nature, you don't have to answer it. It is fine to say, "I'd not prefer to discuss the subject." But don't say, "No comment." That implies guilt and suspicion.

- Act professionally and practice modesty in victory as well as self-control in defeat. Successful communicators control their emotions. They acknowledge the performance of the other team. They concentrate on the team rather than individual accomplishments. They are above pettiness. They do not dwell on the past, and they voice optimism with regards to the future.

- Don't make "off-the-record" comments to reporters. They have a way of winding up in print. Using "off-the-record" is no guarantee of confidentiality. Don't say something unless you feel it will be okay for the public to read or hear about.

- Provide short, sincere answers. Short and simple answers are the easiest to quote. They are least likely to be misunderstood, misquoted and taken out of context. Do not complicate the question and volunteer additional information. Reflect your singular viewpoint in clear, direct, constructive language. Avoid jargon and highly specialized terms.

- Some reporters build uncomfortable pauses into the interview that are designed to get more information from you. Answer the question with a short, direct reply and then wait for the next question. Put the ball back in the reporter's court.

- Appearance can say more than words, so always try to look neat and clean for interviews, especially television interviews. Much of the impression you make in television interviews results from your personal style and your body language. This includes your dress, facial expressions (smile; it makes people feel good and makes them like you) and your posture (stand or sit up straight).

- When doing television and radio interviews, keep your answers short and simple (into 20-second sound bites). Speak louder than normal because the microphones may also pick up back-

ground noises. In TV interviews, look at the interviewer (not into the camera), unless you are doing a live talkback show with an in-studio announcer.

- If the television or radio interview isn't live, don't hesitate to stop and ask if you can repeat your answer. A live interview is just that; it's going out live "as is" to the public. A taped interview will appear later and can be edited. The vast majority of television and radio interviews are of the taped variety.

- If, after the interview is done, you feel uncomfortable with what was asked or what you said, summarize the interview with a media relations representative and seek our counsel.

- Remember to continue to talk positively about the U.S. Military Academy even after you graduate and continue your military or business career. Don't burn bridges. Even during trying situations, a leader of character demonstrates loyalty and consideration of others. Remember, you are shaping the image the public has of yourself, your family, your team and the United States Military Academy.

In summary: Relax and enjoy the interview. Be prompt. Anticipate. You can say "no." Be available and cooperative. Don't go "off-the-record." Be quotable without being controversial or outrageous. You can improve. Remember, you represent West Point.

Sports Illustrated: "There's no doubt about Rocket Ismail's football abilities, but it's fair to say there have been disappointments off the field. He was maddeningly casual about his promotional duties. He stood up some reporters, and he was generally unpredictable. The Canadian media were increasingly frustrated by Rocket's unavailability, so they naturally ceased playing their role in the marketing of a superhero. After enough blown appointments, nobody was willing to cut Ismail slack."

George Forman, former heavy-weight boxing champion: "What made George Foreman was the writers. They tell people about you. Without those guys, you're dead."

ARMY OFFICE OF ATHLETIC COMMUNICATIONS

The Army Office of Athletic Communications, located on the first floor of Bldg. 639 (ODIA), serves as a communications link between West Point teams, athletes, coaches and administrators and the media.

The office tries to promote timely and accurate coverage of the Black Knights by coordinating interviews, servicing the information needs of reporters, and compiling and maintaining Black Knight statistics, photographs, historical records and the athletic departments official web site: www.goARMYsports.com

We don't (and can't) "manage" the news or publicity.

We firmly believe it is in the best interests of the U.S. Military Academy and our athletes to provide optimum service to the media. At the same time, we realize that an athlete's classwork, cadet obligations, team practice and competition schedule come first and we will do our best to coordinate interviews and other media requests accordingly.

If you feel overloaded with too many interviews or want advice on how to handle an interview, don't hesitate to talk to a member of the athletic communications office. That's why we're here – to assist Army athletes and coaches in dealing with the media.

Please come visit us when you have a free moment, because it is important for us to know all about you. The more we know about you, the better we can tell the media about you if and when they do stories on you.

Media Rules for Army Athletes

- Only do interviews that have been set up by a member of the Office of Athletic Communications.
- Do not give out your room or company phone number to a member of the media. A member of the athletic communications office will arrange all phone interviews in the barracks.
- If you have an interview scheduled, punctuality and reliability are critical. Show up at the time you agreed upon. Because of deadlines, the media relies on you to be on time. Should you have a problem making the appointment, always call the Army Office of Athletic Communications. Our phone number is (845) 938-3303.
- We are at your service 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It's okay to call us at the office or on our cellular phones if a media-related question comes up. Our office and cell numbers are listed on the first page.

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

- The Army Athletic Association encourages your use of Social Media provided it is used in the proper way. Facebook, Linked In, Four Square, Twitter and other sites are a great way for coaches and cadets to share information about their programs.
- One of the problems with Social Media is that it is instant and EVERYONE can see what you are posting. With that in mind, the following guidelines have been established.
- You are representing the U.S. Military Academy and are expected to act in accordance.
- We encourage you to write knowledgeably and accurately, with appropriate professionalism.
- Despite disclaimers, your on-line interaction can result in media, fans, staff, peers and members of the public forming opinions about your team.
- Postings should not include Army Athletic Association logos, unless permission is asked for and granted.
- You may not share information that is confidential. This includes information about practice, injuries or any other information that has not been publicly released by the Athletic Communications Office.
- You should never claim or imply you are speaking for the Army Athletic Association.
- Teams and coaches with Social Media pages, including Facebook and Twitter, should notify their Athletic Communications contact so proper links can be established.
- All blogs, Facebook and similar pages should identify that you are a member of the Army Athletic Association and that the views expressed on that page are yours and yours alone and do not represent the view of the Army Athletic Association.
- Be yourself. Clearly identify who you are and your role in the Army Athletic Association.
- Respect your followers and friends. Never use foul language, post inappropriate photos or disrespect those following.
- Honor the privacy rights of our employees by asking their permission before writing about them in any manner that might be considered to be a breach of their privacy and confidentiality.
- Ask first. If you are unsure to post something, seek the guidance of a member of the Athletic Communications staff or your sport supervisor.

INTERVIEW TOP 10 LISTS

DO...

1. Be prepared. Knowledge is power. The more you know about the media, the more comfortable and confident you will be.
2. Be positive. Nobody likes a complainer.
3. Praise your teammates. Nobody becomes successful on his or her own. You can NEVER go wrong by giving credit to others.
4. Talk in sound bites. Keep your answers short and simple. Don't over-answer.
5. Smile. It goes a long way.
6. Relax and be enthusiastic. Make interviews an enjoyable experience for you.
7. Be personable. Show a sense of humor. Be a people person. Everybody likes a good story.
8. Be available and cooperative. It's part of your obligation as a West Point coach or athlete.
9. Be polite in difficult situations. You will make friends and influence people.
10. Bridge to your message. Give the answer that YOU want to give.

DON'T...

1. Don't say "No comment." Figure out a positive way to answer the question or seek an athletic communications staff member for counsel.
2. Don't be negative. The quickest way to land in the "doghouse" is to become a negative influence on your team.
3. Don't go "off-the-record." Don't say something unless you feel it is okay for the public to read or hear. If you see a microphone, camera or reporters notebook, assume your words and actions are being recorded.
4. Don't hide. You can't make the media disappear.
5. Don't lose your cool. The media will test you when adversity comes your way. Remember, the real audience is the fans.
6. Don't forget the fish bowl. As a coach or athlete at the U.S. Military Academy, ALL of your actions are being watched.
7. Don't be sarcastic. It may be funny with your friends, but sarcasm doesn't come across well in newspaper quotes or television interviews.
8. Don't use fillers, slang or acronyms. Well, you know, it just doesn't, um, like, sound real good or something.
9. Don't cop an attitude. Nice guys may finish last on the field, but they are definitely winners off the field.
10. Don't miss the opportunity. Working with the media can help you develop the people skills that you will need in your military career and beyond. In addition, it is a chance to shed positive light on yourself and your team.

