

Vol 2, Issue 16: The Media Fishbowl

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The Australian Open, the NHL All-Star game, the Super Bowl, NCAA March Madness, state high school playoffs...big events that draw lots of attention. With 24-hour news cycles, websites, and other forms of instantaneous communication, athletes, teams and sport organizations are more scrutinized than ever. Living in this media fishbowl can be a motivator or a distraction...how do you experience it?

Coaches and athletes often use the media as a form of motivation. Many coaches post comments from opposing teams in the locker rooms to get their athletes emotionally charged about the next competition. Athletes may use the media itself, taking an "I'll show you" approach if they believe the media has been unfair or particularly critical of their performances. If these, or other approaches, result in the team and/or athletes being more focused, more energized, more confident, and having better performances, then the media has served a positive motivating purpose.

Sometimes, though, the attention from the media can become a distraction. It can disrupt athletes' and teams' normal preparation, both physical and mental, which can lead to loss of focus, lower confidence, less cohesion, and poorer performances. To avoid these negative consequences, coaches and athletes need to plan in advance for how they handle the realities of increased media attention. For more information on preparing successfully for important competitions, visit <http://www.sportpsych.unt.edu/subpages/newsletter/winter00.pdf>

At the Center for Sport Psychology and Performance Excellence at the University of North Texas, we have a dedicated staff of sport consultants who can help athletes, teams, and coaches learn to handle the media so it's only influence is a motivating one. For more information please call us at 940-369-7767 or visit our website at www.sportpsych.unt.edu or email us at sportpsych@unt.edu. As always, we leave you with our sport quote of the week:

"Failure to prepare is preparing to fail." John Wooden