

Jacquie L'Etang

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Preface

What is Sports PR?

Sport involves struggle, success and failure. Its intrinsically competitive nature produces drama and evokes emotion. A central feature of human culture for centuries, its playfulness carries deeper meanings in terms of dominance and identification. It is not only intrinsic pleasure to participants and spectators but has complex symbolic significance. Thus sport is a medium and a focus for human communication. Sport reflects societal preferences and concerns and may be a focus for debate about contemporary issues. While there are benefits arising from sport with regards to individual health and well-being, and sport may be used as a tool to improve societal relations or specific communities, it is also the case that sport can be a focus for hostilities, or lag behind social change, for example in relation to gender. The relationship between sport and society is therefore complex, and its multiple meanings contested. The professionalization of sport in the context of **digital networked society** and **converged media** has stimulated the expansion of sport as mass entertainment, which has coincided with sport's rise up the political agenda. Sport's location in business and politics has engendered the development of a complicated series of networks, investments and policies. Sport is one of the world's major businesses but it is also entertainment, celebrity, participation, fandom and a crucial part of our culture and social identification (Boyle and Haynes, 2006). Public Relations (PR) is implicated at all levels whether handling major sponsorship and media rights deals, events, promoting stars or increasing participation. In the UK even the most modest sports club seeks local media coverage and requires effective stakeholder relations to 'improve its profile' and to gain community support and sponsorship, or even chartered status. Sports PR is a specialist area of PR practice that reveals particular insights into the role that PR plays in contemporary society. The role and practice of PR, which includes media relations, promotion, corporate communications, issues and crisis management, advocacy and public affairs and lobbying, is therefore an important aspect of sports business. PR and sport are both facilitators of communication and relationships and sport is a focus of strategic societal interventions by a variety of actors.

This book endeavours to delineate areas of practice, and to give some idea of the immense range of work that might be described as sports PR but may also be seen under the umbrella terms **sports marketing** or **sports communication**. A deeper understanding of PR concepts and practice highlights the unique contribution they can make to understanding sports business and organizations. The book is intended to reflect the diversity and scale of sports business and the varied and potential roles

of PR within it. The book provides an argument for a more strategic approach to PR work in sports business, and highlight aspects of sport and sports organizations that encourage communicators to reflect upon the role of sport in society, and the nature and limits of sports PR. It also reflects upon strategic intentions that lie behind technical communication and provides some critical perspectives.

What is this Book About?

This book aims to explore the relationship between sport and PR and to reflect upon the following basic questions:

- What is, and should be, the role and scope of PR in sport?
- How are the concepts of PR employed in the sports industry?
- What is the relationship between promotional culture, sport and PR?
- How and why is sport used as a tool of PR, and in what international, national, regional and organizational contexts?
- How are PR services and expertise understood and used within the sports business industry?
- What opportunities exist for sports business to avail itself further of PR concepts?

The aim was to try and capture the dynamic processes of the rapidly industrializing sport business, because it seemed that such rapid transformation would inevitably require PR work focused on communications to enhance relationships and reputations, as well as more basic promotion. Therefore, understanding the ideals, values and rhetoric of the sports business and its practitioners' understandings of networks of relationships was important. A central interest was the extent to which PR is understood as a business function within the sports industry – how was such work described, realized, exemplified and valued by sports business people? The project aimed to capture, at a point when the sports industry must surely need PR experts, the extent to which promotional ideas had diffused within sport, not just at the capitalized and lucrative end of the industry, but also in amateur and minority contexts – **sportscape** and **mediascape** are constantly changing and new 'products' (sports) are being capitalized and commercialized all the time. Therefore the book extends beyond the most popular or the richest sports, which dominate the media.

This is not a 'how to' book, though it may be of interest for practitioners reflecting upon their practice and its wider implications. Instead, this book considers some broader societal themes in relation to PR concepts, such as globalization, nationalism, ethics in sport, gender issues, cultural identity, racism, sport as part of health promotion or tourism. The book aims to go beyond a description of communication techniques, although there are many examples and quotes to illustrate sports business approaches and practices in relation to public relations issues.

While the scale and impact of major sports is recognized, an effort is made to include a

range of examples, and this coverage is tempered with some discussion of less commercial sports. Consideration has been given to the sports business processes that transform and industrialize some sports rather than others. Sport, like language, is an arbitrary sign system comprising multiple symbolic meanings dependent on context, culture and readership. The aim has been to elucidate the dynamics of the relationship between sport and PR at the societal level, at the interplays between economics, politics, culture, ideology and technology, at the business level, but also at the level of specific actors and agents in those dynamic processes.

This book reflects upon the specialist skills and knowledge required of sports PR practitioners and their business and commercial relationships with other key actors such as sports journalists, sports marketers, sponsors, sports agents, sporting associations and governmental bodies. It raises questions about contemporary PR practice in relation to a number of interrelated occupations to which it may offer some new self-understanding. The book aims to define a specialist field of practice within PR and to give an understanding of the nature of work, and the requirements for knowledge in that field. Quotes from business and sports practitioners offer opportunities for reflection on their discursive practices and what these reveal about their values and ideologies. Finally, the book raises a number of critical issues in relation to sport which are relevant to PR practitioners. Thus it blends the pragmatic and critical, to draw out tensions and problematics in the field that will necessarily impact relationships and communication.

The book partly responds to Neupauer's 'plea for helping an unknown field' (2001: 551) but it aims to elucidate exploratory or interpretive lines of enquiry, and to incorporate a more specifically sociocultural perspective. Implicitly it draws attention to the idea that there is more work to be done to explore links between PR and grand-scale social projects, events, media representation and the lifeworlds and lifestyles of citizens drawing on insights of Zaner and Engelhardt Jr (1973), de Certeau (1988), Habermas (1989) and Debord (1994) (cited in L'Etang, 2006).

Why Take a Cultural Perspective?

It is well documented that sport activities have long been part of human cultural activity. Examples include wrestling depicted on a seal and boxing on a relief carving dated at 3000 BC, and there is evidence of spectatorship at public festivals around 2000 BC and during the Cretan-Minoan period (Zauhar, 2004: 24, cited in L'Etang, 2006). However, sport has not always been available to all and, worldwide, access remains restricted in various ways either by economics, politics, ideology, gender, or religion. Thus sport remains contentious, not only in terms of access but also in terms of economic provisions and sport development, both at elite performance and mass participation levels, indicative of requirements for argument, persuasion, lobbying and change. Media representation appears biased and limited since lucrative male sports are dominant in terms of coverage and economic investment and sponsorship, thus shaping at least to some degree social and cultural agendas, discourse, norms and values. Because sport is a sociocultural praxis, it reflects host community norms in relation to gender, age, class

and communities' expectations about sports-appropriate behaviour. For example, in some cultures female body-builders defy conventions about female muscularity (Choi, 2000); and images of active people in their sixties and seventies are rare in broadcast or print media (news, lifestyle and sports magazines), at least in the UK (L'Etang, 2006).

Sport's political heritage is well demonstrated by the long history of sports tourism in which various empires and regimes used sport to articulate or reinforce national identity or provide entertainment for the masses. Examples here include international games in the Egyptian period (Egyptians, Libyans, Syrians and other parts of Africa). and during the Greek Empire 140 cities held athletic events, which stimulated a sports tourism industry (Zauhar, 2004: 32, cited in L'Etang, 2006). Rural communities developed forms of sport that might be played at local festivities, such as at harvest time. Such folk sports are the origins of many contemporary sports. Some remain in ritualistic form, such as the annual Kirkwall Ba' Game which involves kicking a bladder around the capital of the Orkney Islands between the 'uppies' and the 'doonies' (those born on one side of the town versus the other) at Hogmanay. These examples demonstrate dynamics between sport, 'events', tourism and culture.

According to Riordan and Kruger, contemporary modern sport, at least in developed capitalist secular countries, dates its history to the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries when industrial capitalism began to accede to social reformers by legislating for leisure time. In fact 'worker sports' developed as an outgrowth of socialist and **communitarian philosophies** in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, imbued with non-competitive values (Riordan and Kruger, 1999: 105, cited in L'Etang, 2006). Originating in Germany in the 1890s they developed into a fully-fledged alternative to bourgeois sport and Worker Olympics were held in 1925 and 1931, and by 1930, 'worker sport united well over 4 million people, making it by far the largest working class cultural movement' (Riordan and Kruger, 1999: 105, cited in L'Etang, 2006). The worker movement ultimately failed because bourgeois sports, funded by capitalist and totalitarian states alike, drove them out of the market both by making better provisions and gaining extensive mainstream publicity (worker sports were marginalized, only gaining coverage in the socialist press) (Riordan and Kruger, 1999: 114, cited in L'Etang, 2006). This example highlights the connections of sports practice to class, the economy and to organizational internal practices. The relationship between sport and employment as a form of communication is discussed in the third chapter.

Sports have been shaped by social, economic, legal, technological and political change, culture and ideology, managerialism and technology, science and the media. Linkage between these broad-scale developments and the evolution of PR has not received particularly close attention. Sport is a microcosm of social life, which reveals underlying values and power relations. Social practices are reflected in sport and sport is an arena in which a variety of conventions, mores, ethical issues and problematics are played out. Since agency and action are facilitated by communicative action, an understanding of the role of PR in sport can contribute a more subtle understanding of the formation and circulation of public discourses about a range of societal issues.

Who is This Book For?

This book was written with several distinct groups of people in mind: those whose main interests are in sports management, sports marketing, sports business, event management and sponsorship, but who would like to understand better how their expertise relates to that of PR; enthusiasts of sport who are curious about the role of PR in sport; and last, but not least, specialists in PR interested in its application to sport. Consequently, a wide range of disciplines and sources have been drawn on, including sports studies, particularly sports sociology; cultural studies, including the sociology of consumption; media studies, especially sports media; sports business and marketing; as well as the relatively limited literature on sport within PR which provided a reason for attempting to write this book in the first place.

For those unfamiliar with PR concepts and literature, a conscious effort has been made to include definitions and explanatory examples. Furthermore, the second and third chapters provide an introductory explanation of the PR field and core concepts accompanied by illustrative sports examples.

What Research Underpins This Book?

At the outset, the approach to the project was influenced by Bourdieu's recommendation:

‘The researcher should focus on competing interests, the conflict they generate, and the whole logic of a field, which can still only be done by plunging into the particularity of an empirical reality, historically located and dated, but with the objective of constructing it as a special case of what is possible. (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 107)

Empirical research included analysis of the trade journals *SportBusiness International* and *PR Week*;¹ interviews with PR and communications practitioners working for sports organizations, sports PR/marketing organizations and journalists from which a variety of themes and issues emerged. Overall, the aim was to give critical consideration to the role of sports PR in promotional culture and in relation to wider issues. Challenges and issues in sports PR are highlighted, alongside a descriptive overview of work that appears to characterize the fields of sports business. The implicit knowledge, values and assumptions that underpin sports business knowledge are necessary for PR workers to operate successfully in this sector. An interest in sport is obviously helpful, indicated by an emphasis on ‘passion’ that suffuses the business and is a key discourse (see L’Etang, 2013: 308 for examples), but at least as important is curiosity about the complex fields of sports business. PR practitioners in the field not only have to have excellent media and promotional skills, but to understand the links between PR and marketing,

¹These are presented throughout text and references in their abbreviated forms, *SBI* and *PRW*.

events management, sponsorship, sports agency and celebrity management and how these functional relationships affect the realization of PR priorities. Political lobbying at both local and national levels is an important dimension in relation to events bids and resource allocation. Financial acumen and legal competencies are also important in relation, for example, to sponsorship, licensing, media rights and intellectual property.

From an analytical perspective **structural-functionalism** shaped the pragmatic approach to seeking an understanding of PR work in the sports business context, and within sports culture and its subcultures. Bourdieu's concept of **distinction** was employed not only to understand dynamics between different sports cultures but also the apparent understandings about, and structuring of, PR work. Since sport is a rapidly expanding world business embedded in cultures as social practice and as a form of communication, it permits exploration of PR's cultural and symbolic role. Taking a cultural approach to PR assists exploration of its role in the commodification of lifestyles, values and relationships.

Cultural studies provided the **circuit of culture**, a communicative framework in which meaning is created, modified and reinvented during processes of symbolization, representation, regulation, consumption and identity formation within particular cultural contexts, which provided a useful insight into the relationship between culture and economic practice in the sporting context. The concept of **cultural intermediaries** was helpful in describing sports PR practice in society.

Such work is consonant with that of Palmer's interest in **cultural brokers**. In her ethnographic work on the Tour de France she explored 'the institutional power exerted by sporting and administrative elites of world sport' (2000: 364) in which,

‘Like the IOC in the case of the Olympic Games, La Société du Tour de France acts as gatekeeper of cultural traffic, ensuring that only a select range of myths and narratives about the Tour de France are fed into popular consciousness. (2000: 367)

Palmer's concept of media content and influence might be linked to **propaganda models** of the media (Herman and Chomsky, 1988) but also highlights the importance of PR work as mediation between producers and consumers. Furthermore, the reference to **myths and narratives** highlights the role of media sources (PR) in the definition and **framing** of news stories (**primary definition**) and the creation and circulation of news stories and discourses.

Concepts of **professionalism** and **professionalization** were useful in considering the status and expertise of sports PR, while **strategic communication management** highlighted those aspects of practice which do not, at present, appear to be within the **jurisdiction** of many practitioners. **Critical theory, rhetoric** and **discourse ethics** were useful background concepts, useful in highlighting **power**, and the discursive work that is carried out on behalf of sports and sports business. Critical questions relate to the existence and reproduction of discursive inequalities within sports and the business that attaches to it, and the role of PR in that process. There are wider power relations within the sports public sphere, and those with economic power may dominate discourses. Culturally and financially important sports, their routines, values and language are central to societal communication.

Some individuals may capitalize on their sporting success to gain real political power. For example, *SBI* commented of former British middle-distance Olympic athlete Lord Coe that ‘Coe the athlete morphed into Coe the ultimate sports politician’ (*SBI*, 2009e: 26–28). The relationships among and between sports, media and politics highlighted the significance of **source-media relations** and the ability of sport to present itself as a social good raised interesting questions about the ability to raise critical perspectives about sports practice and the influence of sports business in society.

Sport engages with, and contributes to the formation of, elites and their distinction from others, yet it is claimed to be a solution to problems that are at least partially the responsibility of governments and global imbalances. It has become embedded in capitalist economics and involves multiple overlapping networks within governmental, financial and social contexts. Communications are therefore central to a very complex global sports system with numerous subsystems. These perspectives position sport as part of social change and development – and PR is implicitly, if not explicitly, an intrinsic part of such change processes. Change entails the promotion of new agendas, probable resistance in some quarters, advocacy and persuasion, stakeholder communication, and engagement with public opinion. These are all central elements of the work and occupation known as PR, the role of which is defined and discussed in this book. Sport and PR share optimistic ideals about their global roles and contribution to society, and both have been seen as a way of developing **bonding** and **bridging** strategies to develop **social capital** and **communities**.

However, idealistic claims regarding the role of sport in promoting **civil society** may be counterpointed by allegations of child exploitation, lack of accountability, corruption and the use of performance-enhancing drugs, and such dualisms imply a clear role for PR advocacy and reputation management. Idealistic claims regarding the role of PR in promoting democratic practices, consultation and dialogue may be countered by critiques that see strategic communication as a form of propaganda. Throughout this book there will be reminders that opinions about sport and PR are socially constructed, open for debate, and not fixed meanings. The corollary of this is that there are in circulation a number of competing discourses both of sport and of PR, some of which are subjected to scrutiny in this book.

How This Book is Organized

The book is written thematically, so concepts and ideas cross-fertilize and accumulate throughout. Examples are integrated throughout the text in order to illustrate day-to-day realities, to bring issues and contexts to life, and to illuminate concepts. More developed examples are boxed out separately. Some examples are distinguished under headings **Discuss!** and **Think Critically** providing exercises for student readers and tutor directed tasks. Chapters conclude with a list of **Further Reading**.

The book covers three main aspects that are integrated throughout: the cultural and business contexts and issues of sport (the various dynamics between sport, business,

media, culture and PR); operational contexts and issues (specialized areas of practice); and occupational contexts and issues (the role and scope of PR activity and key concepts). The early chapters explain key concepts in PR and communications and then proceed to concentrate on delineating the dynamics between sports business, communications and PR practice in global and organizational contexts. Later chapters bring together a range of interdisciplinary perspectives to understand the nature and role of PR practice in a sports context, and to identify problematics in the field.

Chapter 1 draws on a range of disciplines to provide an overview of previous work relevant to a consideration of PR work in sport. It sketches key aspects of the media environment and introduces relevant concepts of celebrity and commodification. Chapters 2 and 3 build understanding of different facets of PR concepts including key terminology, frameworks and examples. Chapter 4 takes a global perspective, looking at issues such as public diplomacy. Chapter 5 positions PR within sports business. Chapter 6 links PR to events, while Chapter 7 looks at sport designed for social impacts. Chapter 8 discusses lifestyle and minority sports. Chapter 9 reflects back on the PR role in the sporting environment and considers wider implications for its occupational role.

Further Reading

- Jackson S (2012) Reflections on communication and sport: on advertising and promotional culture. *Communication & Sport*, 1 (1/2): 100–112.
- Pedersen P (2012) Reflections on communication and sport: on strategic communication and management. *Communication & Sport*, 1 (1/2): 55–67.

1

Introducing PR and Sport

Introduction

This chapter aims to provide an overview of key discipline sources and to provide contextual background to sports PR in relation to the media environment, celebrity, commodification and representation. It provides an introductory review positioning sport and PR in relation to one another; an overview of sport in its sociocultural context, and introduces issues surrounding sports' media representations. The relationships between PR, sport and politics, and between sport, celebrity and PR are also introduced. This chapter begins with an overview review of some historical literature relevant to a consideration of the role of PR in sport. PR is contextualized within the converged media environment and journalism practices linked to sports business imperatives.

The chapter covers:

- PR and sport: sources and developments
- Convergent media in a digital networked world
- Sport celebrity and PR
- Commodification and representation
- Personal PR

Key Concepts

- Celebrity
- Commodification
- Convergent media
- Discourse technologist
- Legacy media
- Mediascape
- Moral panics
- News subsidy

- Primary definition
- Representation
- Secondary definition
- Source-media relations
- Sportscape

PR and Sport: Sources and Developments

Within PR relatively little attention has been given to sport. Exceptions include Curtin and Gaither who, writing from an international perspective, noted the value of sports business to PR consultancy and pointed out that the topic is ‘overlooked in international PR texts, yet sports can unify nations, promote social change and affect the national psyche, making it a powerful cultural agent’ (2006: 29–30). Authors from sports management, sports marketing, sports journalism, events management, and sports media sociology all touch upon PR concerns and activities though with little reference to PR concepts or literature. In the US, sports PR is uniquely defined as a separate occupational and academic specialism, that of ‘sports direction’ (Johnson, 1996; Helitzer, 1999; Neupauer, 2001; Irwin et al., 2002). Nichols et al. (2002) focused on sports media relations (L’Etang, 2006: 386). Anderson (2006) explored the use of PR to seek support for a business merger between two pro football leagues in the US. Sports marketers (Shank, 2002; Chadwick and Beech, 2006) took some interest in the field but it was Hopwood (2006) introduced public relations perspectives to sports marketing and the role of PR in sports marketing in her study of PR practice in English county cricket (Hopwood, 2005). Sports management and event management texts (for example Bowden et al. 2003) have not generally given PR the attention it deserves. However, Rojek’s (2013) text on events written from a sociocultural perspective presents a useful engagement with PR activities. Finally and most recently, Pedersen’s (2013) edited collection *Routledge Handbook of Sport Communication* marks a major step forward in the development of the field.

From a PR perspective Hopwood et al.’s (2010) edited text made a specific specialist contribution in presenting an explicitly functional account of the field. They framed the role of PR as response to crisis – all of the examples they give in their opening pages are critical incidents and scandals, although topics covered by contributors range more widely across corporate social responsibility (CSR), marketing, relationship management, fan relations, PR for individuals and international and cross-cultural communications. Critical work including an interpretive analysis of the purchase of a baseball team focused on source-media relations, media content and subsequent impact on media framing (Trujillo, 1992); and a textual analysis of a sports organization’s community relationship programme that drew out competing rhetorical positioning (Boyd and Stahley, 2008). A Special Issue of *Public Relations Review* largely focused on reputational issues such as those surrounding player transgressions (Wilson et al., 2008); crises (Bruce and Tini, 2008; Dimitrov, 2008; Pfahl and Bates, 2008); reputation and image repair (Fortunato, 2008; Brazeal, 2008); publicity and marketing techniques (Anderson, 2008; Mitrook et al., 2008) including online (Woo et al., 2008). Several contributions explored rhetorical strategies and discourses including techniques of apology and diversion (Brazeal, 2008;

Pfahl and Bates, 2008; Jerome, 2008) or based on Benoit's **image repair** framework (Benoit, 1995, 1999; Benoit and Hanzicor, 1994). The subject matter in some cases was uncompromising, dealing with violence, sexual attack, activism, professional jealousies and emotions – all unusual topics for PR journals. Benoit's framework is used as the basis for a **Think Critically** box in Chapter 3, p. 57).

Sport studies include a range of sociological themes including gender, class, race, politics, economics, national identity and globalization (Riordan and Kruger, 1999; Gratton and Henry, 2001; Hargreaves, 1994; Allison, 2005; Maguire, 2006; Jarvie, 2006). But there has been a growing interchange between sports and media studies reflected in special issues in *Media, Culture & Society* and the *International Review for the Sociology of Sport; Sports Media*. More journals are now available such as the *International Journal of Sport Communication*, and *Communication & Sport*. Within sports studies, it has taken time for PR to be given attention. A typical approach was taken by Whannel (2000) who focused on media sport failing to take account of PR's contribution to the business development of the sport industry. *The Handbook of Sports Studies* (Coakley and Dunning, 2000) defined the field of sports studies, its histories, paradigms and concerns, and included a contribution focused on production, content and audience, but made only passing reference to the potential for information to be 'controlled by press and PR departments' (2000: 292).

Media studies sociologists have focused on professional sports, news media – especially TV (Whannel, 2000: 291) – TV rights, media economics (Haynes, 2005), sports fans and fanzines (Haynes, 1995; Crawford, 2004), national identity (Boyle, 1992; Blain et al., 1993), concentrating on mainstream team sports covered regularly on sports pages and occasionally on news pages of newspapers (Boyle and Haynes, 2000, cited in L'Etang, 2006). As Campbell (2004: 203–4) pointed out, entertainment, sport and lifestyle media have tended to be 'dismissed or ignored rather than analysed' as mainstream media academics have focused on political public affairs and news media practice and this narrow focus was illustrated in the *Sage Handbook of Media Studies* (Downing et al., 2004) which did not index either sport or PR (L'Etang, 2006).

The media sociological concept of **source-media relations** is relevant to interrogating PR's influence (Hall, 1969, 1978; Ferguson, 1990; Schlesinger, 1990; McNair, 1996; D. Miller, 1998), or PR's role in **primary definition** whereby media sources generate initial and particular interpretations of events, issues and other actors in an attempt to protect reputation or promote particular **frames of reference** or ideologies, thus reducing the media to **secondary definers**. It has been noted that sports journalism has had lower status than other forms of journalism, and sports journalists often find it hard to gain professional autonomy because they may be former sports stars themselves (or fans) and therefore find it challenging to maintain critical distance (Boyle, 2006). Sports journalism encompasses a range of media including magazines that appear to attract different personalities, as one former journalist commented,

“ I wanted to work in a magazine because I preferred the environment, newspapers are more pressurized, political and stressful ... everything was just about contacts and finding a story, not about the writing. I found magazines much more satisfying

and the fact that it is participatory journalism in that I get to do the things we write about, it's service journalism.

Media sociologists (Boyle and Haynes, 2000; Haynes, 2005; Boyle, 2006; Wanta, 2013) have also produced useful insights into relationships between media, sources, sponsors and sport, but tended to focus on traditional media relations rather than the broader aspects of PR work. The **converged media** context has impacted the sports environment and operation and this is discussed below. Historical studies that focused on the relationships between news sources (including PR practitioners) and the media 'on the beat' – were explored from the perspective of the sports journalist, employing concepts such as **gatekeeper** (people that sift incoming news items and determine which items are retained as possible news stories), **agenda setting** (people and institutions that set the news agenda), disinformation and focusing on the ambivalent interdependence between sports promoter and journalist (Bourgeois, 1995; Lowes, 1987).

Bourgeois considered the **bonding** processes that take place in the sociocultural context of sports journalism and the precariousness of maintaining professional distance from PR sources. Bourgeois suggested that the strategy adopted by sports journalists could be defined in processual terms, within which journalists,

Must transform interactions between sports teams and between athletes into an entertaining sports spectacle ... through a process of spectacularization, which is founded on the ethics of entertainment, on the use of the lexicons of fantasy, combat, and passion, and on dramatization ... because the outcome is unpredictable. (1995: 199)

Bourgeois's analysis suggested that stories may begin with co-operative tendencies between PR practitioners and journalists, proceed to an identification of flaws that become socio-dramatic anchors or foci for a variety of narratives and speculative scenarios and solutions (L'Etang, 2006). In short, an initially collaborative relationship might unravel, through inconsistencies or alternative stories and rumours, subsequently developing into a reputational crisis for an individual, a team or a whole sport, as has happened with drug-use allegations in various sporting contexts. These processes accelerated with digitization and social media.

The tensions between media and sources are not always unhelpful to sources, however. In September 2011, the International Cycling Union (UCI) hosted the World Road Cycling Championship in Copenhagen. In the weeks leading up to the race, the media was filled with negative headlines predicting traffic chaos and road closures. However, according to Lars Lundov, Sport Event Denmark, the negative media coverage helped organizers to solve problems and communicate alternative modes of transport, claiming that, 'It went in our favour ... we didn't have any problems' (Evans, 2012a: 26).

Collaborative tendencies may also be mitigated by competitive pressures and the temptation for **sting journalism** that may involve tempting sportspeople into compromising situations.

What Happens on Tour, Stays on Tour?

In the UK *The Sunday Times* highlighted alleged corrupt practices by two members of FIFA's Executive Committee. These were pursued and the two members were disciplined. However, the Head of the Federation's Ethics Committee criticised the media exposé. Commenting on this incident Kevin Roberts, Editor of *SBI* noted the changing relationship between media and sport, and urged closer co-operation,

In an ideal world [media and sport] would feed off each other, making the other stronger and richer. But today the relationship is driven by distrust and fear rather than the mutual respect which was once the case ... early Test Match cricket ... was a six-week journey by sea. Players and the gentlemen of the press travelled on the same ships, often with the journalists in first-class and the cricketers ... in standard. Inevitably, men who spent time together travelling formed bonds and friendships, which overlapped and supported their professional relationships. One of the results was the 'what happens on tour stays on tour' mentality, which recognised that humans – whether or not they are sportsmen – are likely to do dumb things from time to time. Today everything has changed. Intense competition, in the print, online and broadcast media sectors creates unprecedented pressure for journalists to go way beyond match reports. Journalists and professional sports people might as well live on different planets and deep personal relationships between the two sides have become extremely rare. (Roberts, 2010b: 7).

Discuss!

How close should journalists be to their subjects or their PR representatives in the pursuit of a story and why? What are the societal implications of close or hostile relationships? How close should the relationship between sports business and the media be? How does social media influence these relationships? Finally, what does the quote reveal about historic gender assumptions that prevailed upon the cultures and practices of sport and sports journalism, and to what extent may these affect sports in society today and social attitudes more generally?

Convergent Media in a Digital Networked World

Following Meikle and Young (2012), the term **convergent media** is used in this book to capture the range and linkages between contemporary media. **Networked digital**