



Sport Public Relations and Communication



Edited by Maria Hopwood, Paul Kitchin & James Skinner
288 pages, Butterworth-Heinemann, 2010

Reviewed by John Beech, Coventry University, UK

If public relations and communication were once peripheral topics in sports management studies, high profile reports such as those relating to the behaviour of Tiger Woods (2009) and Max Mosley (2008) have made sure they remain firmly on the curriculum. Following a series of allegations Woods found himself not just playing off-form but also facing a considerable loss of income from his various endorsement contracts. Mosley saw himself presented in the media in a way that he might have wished were otherwise following allegations over his private life. During the past year we have seen an increase in the number of well known sports figures among the Twitterati, often creating problems for themselves through knee-jerk postings.

There has been a notable absence of textbooks for undergraduate and postgraduate students on sports management and sports marketing courses, with the obvious exception of Sport Public Relations by Stoldt, Dittmore and Branvold (2006). This tome is becoming dated, and for UK and other European students, is not ideal as it was written with a North American market in mind. Hopwood, Kitchin and Skinner identified this gap in the market and sought to fill it with a reasonably priced (£29.99), up-to-date and more globally focused alternative. The chosen authors collectively have experience as practising academics in the UK, Europe, Australia and New Zealand as well as in North America, and make a formidable team of specialists. This results in a good spread of geographical locations for the case study settings and a wide range of sports for their context. A minor irritation is that the publisher, Butterworth-Heinemann,

has not included a list of the case studies.

The book follows what has now become an established format for edited textbooks published in the UK, with each chapter including learning outcomes, an overview, key terms, discussion questions, guided reading, recommended websites and references. The application of this standard format works well in establishing a coherent presentation for student readers.

Following two introductory chapters, a range of appropriate topics are covered: relationship marketing, social responsibility, volunteerism, crisis communication, cross-cultural communication and, of growing importance, the use of social media. If the editors ever hesitated about the last of these, their decision to include it was definitely a wise one.

The only reservation this reviewer has with the publication as presented is that guideline answers to the discussion questions are included within the book rather than as a separate teacher's manual. The latter might more helpfully have been made available on a password-protected website. The chosen arrangement is not especially helpful for promoting what would otherwise be lively debates in seminars, nor is the decision to locate discussion questions at the end of each chapter rather than with the relevant case study.

These minor criticisms aside, the book fills the identified gap very well indeed, and is certainly to be recommended for appropriate modules.

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