

Print Media Coverage of Women's Sport:: Implications for South African Sport Managers and Media Editors

Anneliese Goslin, University of Pretoria, South Africa
Darlene A Kluka, Kennesaw University

**Session 28: Communication
Presentation (25-minute)**

Saturday, June 2, 2007

1:00 PM - 1:25 PM

Priority Six of the South African White Paper on Sport and Recreation (South African Government, 2004) emphasizes the issues of access, equity and transformation as matters of consequence in South African sport. As equity in sport implies the practice of fairness and the application of social justice to decision making processes in all situations, individuals should be respected, have equal access and opportunities, and have protected rights. It is logical that these values prevail in the spectrum of sport products and services (SportEngland, 2004). This perception, however, is often not apparent. Supportive lip service to access and equity becomes the norm. One approach to monitor the status of equity and transformation in sport is to examine the print media's coverage of selected indicators of equity and transformation in the sport industry of a specific country. The print media constitutes an influential sport product provider and has the potential to drive and shape values and attitudes. Analyses of sport coverage in the media have been undertaken by a number of scholars, especially in North America (Rintala & Birrell, 1984; Theberge & Cronk, 1984; Kane, 1988; Lumpkin & Williams, 1991; Hatch & Kluka, 1992; Duncan, 1993; Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles, 1994; 1999; 2000; 2005). A literature search revealed no South African study in this regard.

Managing equity and transformation in sport requires a multidimensional approach. The equity framework for sport proposed by SportEngland (2004) suggests participation, leadership, policy and communications as minimum key performance standards for auditing and managing the status of equity within the sport industry. In South Africa, key performance indicators for equity and transformation in sport focus on ethnic demographics as reflected in sport management, leadership, participation and coach profiles, access to facilities, private sector sponsorship profile, infrastructure, media coverage with reflection for social responsibility, professional management development, fair employment practices contributing to Black economic empowerment and content of sport management training curricula. The contribution of the print media as an influential instrument to achieve and maintain equity and transformation becomes a key driver and variable in managing the current South African sport transformation process. The purpose of this investigation was therefore to determine in a South African context if: (1) sports women and men receive differential coverage in the print media, (2) different sport disciplines receive differential coverage in the print media, (3) sport management issues receive superficial coverage in the print media (4) to evaluate the implications of media coverage for sport management against the key performance indicators for equity and transformation in South African sport; and (5) to provide a baseline for monitoring change in media coverage of female sport over time in South Africa.

A quantitative and qualitative content analysis of 2806 articles was conducted comprising five national South African newspapers for three calendar months in 2006. The included newspapers represented 65.20 % of total newspaper readership in South Africa. Seven variables were included in the content analysis with the extent of coverage, length of articles in column centimeters, number of photographs, type of sport depicted in photograph, sport issue reported on in the article, gender of reporter and type of advertisements on sport pages. Data of each newspaper were captured on coding sheets. Quantitative data were further analyzed qualitatively and applied to the sport management context of South Africa and its contribution to managing transformation and equity in sport.

Overall findings indicate significant under-reporting and under-representation in five of the variables set for media coverage of female sport (extent of coverage, length of articles, number and type of photographers, gender of reporter). This resembles North American and European findings, despite policies and declarations such as Title IX, Brighton Declaration and South African sport transformation requirements. Traditional male sports (rugby, soccer, cricket, and boxing) were reported on extensively, while females were only mentioned briefly in tennis and track and field articles. Articles reported primarily on participation in sport (41 %), events (23.03 %), personal profiles of athletes (18.41 %), sport management (15.13 %), and sport development (2.4 %). Sport management articles related to predominantly mismanagement in sport governing bodies. In addition to the obvious quantitative under-representation of female sport, the advertising profile on sports pages also suggested male dominance in media coverage as audience building favored products such as automobiles, men's health products and office equipment. Findings impact on South African sport management essentially in the fields of sport marketing and sponsorships (audience building for sponsorships), sport management curricula (gender sensitivity and awareness in sport journalism preparation), sport information (managing media relations and gender sensitive management information systems), and strategic management (transformation in sport benchmarks and plans, policy documents). For newspaper editors as gatekeepers of social

2007 North American Society for Sport Management Conference (NASSM 2007)

values and attitudes, the significance of these findings highlights the importance of social responsibility versus economic reality and equitable utilization of resources with regard to societal transformation in South African sport. It can be concluded that South African sport transformation and equity guidelines relative to media coverage and social responsibility are largely ignored in print media and sport management. This investigation is also intended to provide a baseline for monitoring change in media coverage of female sport over time in South Africa and could serve as a reference point for sport managers and sport organizations to facilitate transformation in sport.

References

- AMATEUR ATHLETIC FOUNDATION OF LOS ANGELES. (2005). Coverage of women's sports in four daily newspapers. Los Angeles, CA: Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles.
- DUNCAN, M.C. (1993). Beyond analyses of sport media texts: An argument for formal analyses of institutional structures. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 10:353-372.
- HATCH, S & KLUKA, D.A. (1992). Reading between the lines. *Coaching Women's Basketball*, June/July: 20-21.
- KANE, M.J. (1988). Media coverage of the female athlete before, during and after Title IX: Sports Illustrated revisited. *Journal of Sport Management*, 2:87-99.
- LUMPKIN, A & WILLIAMS, L.D. (1991). An analysis of Sports Illustrated feature articles, 1954-1987. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 8:16-32.
- RINTALA, J. & BIRRELL, S. (1984). Fair treatment for the active female: A content analysis of Young Athlete magazine. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 1(3):231-250.
- SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT. (2004). White Paper on Sport and Recreation. Government Printer: Pretoria
- SPORTENGLAND. (2004). *The Equity Standard: A framework for sport*. D & J Press: Harlow, UK.
- THEBERGE, N. & CRONK, A. (1984). Work routines in newspaper sports departments and the coverage of women's sports. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 3(3): 195-203.