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Examining themes and portrayals in print media for Asian Female Olympic Medalists during the 2000-2006 Games

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**Presentation (25-minute)
Abstract 98**

Sport industry has become a global business. Sport teams and organizations have been expanding their market internationally by broadcasting the games overseas or recruiting players from other countries. As of 2006, the NBA featured 82 international players from 38 countries (NBA.com, 2007) and the percentage of international players in MLB was 30.3% (Lapchick & Martin, 2006).

Media plays an important role to promote sport globalization and shorten the distance among countries to deliver instant sports news to the fans; especially the coverage for international events and the Olympic Games. Thus, researchers have conducted studies on media portrayals and the coverage of female athletes (e.g., Billings & Tambosi, 2004; Denham, 2004; Higgs, Weiller, & Martin, 2003; Pedersen, Whisenant, & Schneider, 2003; Tuggle & Owen, 1999; Vincent, Imwold, Masemann, & Johnson, 2002; Vincent, Imwold, Johnson, & Massey, 2003; Williams, Lawrence, & Rowe, 1985).

Due to the popularity of professional sports in the United States, media attention usually concentrates on international players from the MLB and the NBA. Elite Olympic athletes from other countries, especially female athletes from Asia, get less attention from the media compared with international professional players. In addition, although there are many studies regarding media coverage of female athletes, there is little research focusing on female athletes from Asia. As a result, the major purpose of this study was to evaluate how female Olympic athletes from Asia were portrayed and reported in print media.

Content analysis was used for data collection and a coding sheet was developed from the literature review (Denham, 2004; McCarthy & Jones, 1997; Pedersen, Whisenant, & Schneider, 2003; Tuggle & Owen, 1999). The analysis of news articles included quantitative and qualitative reviews. The quantitative analysis contains the amount of coverage devoted to sports and the quantity of text themes. In order to calculate the correlation between the medals and coverage devoted to each sport, a point system was used to calculate the scores of medals. It is hypothesized that the more medals for the sports, the more news coverage the sports receive. Qualitative analysis for news coverage included evaluating positive, neutral, or negative portrayals of athletes' physical appearance, psychological characteristics, and physical strength/athleticism.

A list of female medalists from Asia was retrieved from the "Olympic Medal Winners" search database on the International Olympic Committee (IOC) website (IOC, 2007). Due to the considerable number of medalists, only athletes from individual sports were chosen for this study. News articles from January 1st, 2000 to December 31, 2006 referring to female Olympic athletes from Asia were selected from the U.S. electronic news database-ProQuest. Furthermore, the keyword of the athlete's name was used to filter articles as the athlete's last name should appear on the article title. A total of 251 news articles were selected for this study.

The results of this study indicated that the text themes covered in print media include nationalism, heroism, drug issues, special meaning of the medals for the countries, and the incentives for athletes to compete in the Olympic Games. Qualitative analysis showed that reporters frequently mentioned the athletes' psychological characteristics with reinforcement of female characteristics. Also the articles from countries in Asia have tendency to emphasize nationalism. The news articles commonly stated the athletes' incentives to compete in the Games and the awards they received for their Olympic medals. The results of this study will provide sport management professionals information about news coverage of female athletes from Asia and as well as the areas in print media that need to be emphasized to fill the gap.