**RTV 380 Broadcast Sports Interviewing Tips**

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1.The purpose of the broadcast sports interview is usually to get sound bites, or “sound,” with athletes and coaches, their thoughts and reflections on a game just ended or coming up. The interview is only rarely about actually unearthing factual information. So, the approach of the broadcast sports interview is often to prompt the athlete to talk about a given subject, rather than to ask questions, as such.

2.Therefore, a technique that works well is to begin with, “Tell me about …” or even, “Talk about ….” This way, you point the athlete/coach in the direction you want him/her to go.

3.Be knowledgeable of the game, the team and the player. If you’re covering a particular game, take note of key plays or trends in the game (a blocked punt, an unusual number of penalties, etc.), and plan to direct the player/coach to talk about those. If you’re interviewing a player/coach prior to an upcoming game, familiarize yourself with what happened in the most recent game and what challenges the upcoming team poses. Bottom line: do your homework, be prepared with intelligent questions.

4.Immediately after a game, your first “question” may simply be, “Coach, your thoughts on the game.” Let him/her go where they want to go. Then, you may follow up with, “Tell me about the decision to pitch to Pujols in the eighth inning.”

5.Listen to their answers. In what they say, they may very well say something interesting or surprising that suggests a better question than the next one you had. Also, they may actually answer your next question before you ask it, which will make you look foolish if you then ask the question.

6.Maintain eye contact, so that the player/coach knows that you are actually listening to what they say, and interested in what they say.

7.It is far easier to interview winning player/coach than a losing player/coach. Everyone’s happy and generous when they’ve won. Not so much when they lose.

Use common sense. How would you like to answer pointed questions from a stranger at the end of a very bad day? Be somewhat sympathetic in how you pose your questions. Again, generally, it’s more diplomatic to let the athlete/coach take it in the direction they want: “Coach, a difficult night for your team …” If you were interviewing Tony Romo after the infamous bobbled extra-point snap, your “question” might be: “Tony, tell me about the extra-point play.”

8.“Why” is usually the start of a good question, but in an emotional moment it can also set a coach or athlete off. Think about how your dad reacted to “why …” when you were a kid.

9.Some reporters (Howard Cosell, Jim Rome) make a reputation for themselves by being “in your face.” If that’s your personality, go with it, but don’t force it. It’s a harder way to go.

10.Hold mics just below the subject’s chin, about six inches away, so as not to “invade their space.” Do not let someone take the mic from you (this happens rarely, but sometimes it will happen with someone who is not accustomed to being interviewed). If it happens, smile and politely say, “It’s better if I hold the mic,” and take it back. Again, maintain eye contact so they look at you, not the camera.

11. Be sure your equipment is working before you leave. Be sure you take all the equipment you need. For a press conference or post-game interview room situation, there will probably be a “mult-box” (multiple-connection box) that allows many reporters to plug into the sound system. You’ll need a cable with an XLR connector to plug into the mult-box.

12. In a locker-room situation, you may not have room or time to set up a tripod, so be prepared to shoulder the camera or hold it steady in some other way without a tripod.