

# 3rd International Sports News Conference

29 – 30 March 2012, Madrid, Spain



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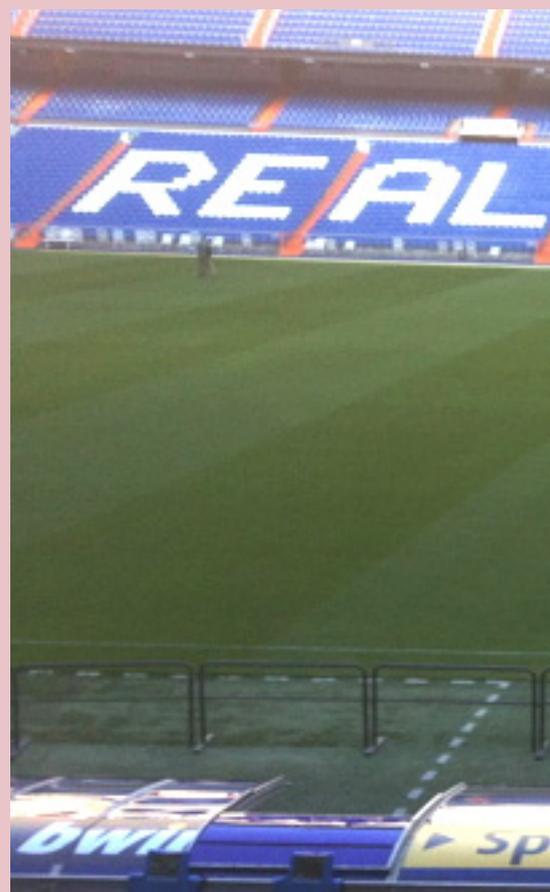
### Summaries of the 3rd Sports News Conference

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# Can Media Compete With Sport?

## Dear colleague,

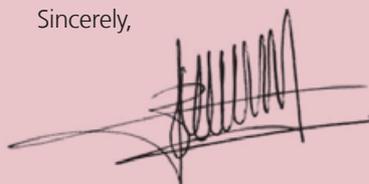
Newspapers no longer just cover sports – they compete with them.

The footballer Cristiano Ronaldo has 42 million fans on Facebook. Nike puts out a sports magazine as good as any done by the traditional press. Fan sites are the go-to destination for millions who once turned to newspapers as the primary source for sports news.

When athletes, teams, sports organisations and sporting good companies become publishers themselves, the fundamental relationship between sport and media changes. Do they even need traditional media anymore? Sports editors and media executives from around the world gathered at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium in Madrid on 29 and 30 March to exchange strategies and advice for successfully competing with these new challengers.

This report summarizes the discussions at the 3rd International Sports News Conference, organised by the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA). We hope you find this report a useful supplement to the conference.

Sincerely,



**Olivier Bourgeois**

Director General  
WAN-IFRA



# Nike is eating our lunch

**In providing an overview of the most interesting developments of sports news over the past year, Matt Kelly, Publisher of Mirror Digital, cites the rise of non-traditional competitors for traditional media as the most significant.**

Big brands like Nike, sports organisers and football clubs, athletes and broadcasters are all moving into the space once dominated by newspapers, and they are often doing it better, says Mr Kelly, opening WAN-IFRA's 3rd International Sports News Conference in the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium in Madrid, Spain.

"Football clubs are often the most controlling, arrogant organisations, but digitally, they're willing to partner up with social media, and in many cases they do it better than we do," he says.

Nike, which already has a loyal fan base, is a good example of "a big brand playing in a space we previously owned," he says. "They create magazine-style content around sports and fitness that is as good as any specialty sports magazine in the market."

But all is not lost for newspapers, he said. Partnerships are important. Mr Kelly talks about partnering with companies that can repurpose newspaper content – link aggregators, e-edition e-mail newsletters. "To me, it's another way of taking what we already do, finding a partner to repurpose it, and finding a new way to engage with our customers," he says.

Exploring new geographic markets are also an opportunity. UK newspapers are finding that English football content provides an opportunity for international expansion. "Where the potential is, is if you can find a good partner, with a good sales team, and there is a good market, I think it's really important for us as publishers to explore those possibilities," he says.

Mobile usage also is finally fulfilling its promise, he says. "The question for me about websites and mobile, is that many of us consider mobile to be an offshoot of our website. But there is a lot of evidence to suggest that mobile should be the primary publishing platform, and desktop should be the afterthought," he says.

"When we're faced with publishers who are really good, and happen to be football clubs or sports organisers, we just have to be really good and better and earn our place in the users limited engagement time," Mr Kelly says.



# Loyalty and traffic: a social media primer

**Cyrille Frank, a WAN-IFRA social media consultant, admits he is no expert on newspapers. But he is an expert on social media, and his advice on how social platforms can be used by newspapers is worth noting.**

“Engagement is the key to ensure loyalty of fans and traffic. We need to look after both aspects – the greater the engagement, the more traffic,” he says.

The goal, he says, is simple; “to ensure that people keep clicking, that they want to know more.”

But while the goal is simple, the techniques are varied. Compelling content is of primary importance – but on social media, presentation and interaction are just as important.

“We may have the best content, but if not duly selected and laid out, it won’t attract the attention of the users,” he says.

In a wide-ranging presentation, just a few of his recommendations:

- More images, less talk. “Communicate messages directly because people don’t have time,” says Mr Frank. “We need to use keywords, be to the point. But first we need to ensure high quality images. The big photo with content is compelling – this multiplies the value of what we’re offering.”
- Place the fans at the centre. “We need to rely on them to generate the flow of information. It’s co-creation,” says Mr Frank. “We should ask for users opinions at all times. Ask for their personal opinion and tastes. And valorise their contributions – contests, for example, provide more value for users and will generate a word-of-mouth effect.”
- Make better use of Twitter hashtags. This is something that takes time to build, but publishers need to ensure the hashtags become their own destinations. “We should come up with hashtags that people are following.”
- Publish contributions cross-media. For example, ask fans at the end of matches to suggest headlines for the next day’s paper.
- Use social games and apps. Enable fans to make predictions during games, vote on various topics, compete with other players and challenge friends. Creating fantasy game blogs is also recommended. “We have to ensure an interaction. Make sure our content offering is broadened,” he says.
- Develop communities first, and content payment schemes second. Mr Frank says it’s a mistake to force users to subscribe or pay for content before they are loyal to your offering. If they’re engaged first, they’ll be willing to pay.



More on WAN-IFRA social media and other training can be found at [[www.wan-ifra.org/node/31301](http://www.wan-ifra.org/node/31301)]

# Cristiano Ronaldo: Social Media Champion



**The world of sport can debate whether Cristiano Ronaldo is the world's greatest football player, but there is no arguing when it comes to his place in social media.**

With nearly 42 million fans on Facebook, and 8 million followers on Twitter, Ronaldo is the world's most popular sports star on social media (and fifth most popular Facebook presence overall, behind Michael Jackson, Facebook, Texas Hold 'Em Poker and Lady Gaga).

"Cristiano Ronaldo is the best example of a champion becoming a media brand with the good use of social networks," says Claude Droussent, CEO of the France-based sports consultancy Malt, who said media companies have much to learn from Ronaldo's success.

Fifty-five per cent of people who have an internet connection world-wide also have a Facebook account, so it's worth noting what Ronaldo has been doing on the platform.

Here is what Mr Droussent says is responsible for his success:

- Exclusive content, "what he thinks, how he plays, photos when he travels, content every day."
- "Sport-tainment", in the form of games and Apps.
- Incentives, in the form of opportunities to win time with him and other contests.
- Community management. Ronaldo has two employees managing his social media presence. He spends 1 hour daily with them to add content, answers questions from fans. "He's very interactive with people."

# Spanish inspiration from British football

**The Spanish media company Chapman Strategies, the publisher of SportYou.es, takes its inspiration from the late British football manager Herbert Chapman, who is credited with conceiving floodlights, artificial turf, and numbered jerseys.**

Mr Chapman would be proud. What started out as a pure-play sports magazine has morphed into an innovative technology and editorial content company that provides media services for a variety of customers.

Developing new competencies is what the company is all about, says Communications Director Roberto Fernandez.

It was a search for advertisers that led to the new business concept. One potential advertiser, Repsol, was so impressed with the SportYou concept that it hired the company to produce its annual report, replacing a printed report with an interactive version that included videos, infographics and other media.

Other businesses followed. The professional football league LFP contracted a weekly magazine. Other businesses include widgets and Apps, social networks and other products for a variety of customers.

"We sell both technology and content," says Mr Fernandez. "Our newsroom since day 1 manages everything. What we want to do is offer content on multimedia channels."



# Marca: Newspaper, web – and sports café?

**The old newspaper business model based on advertising and circulation revenue is under pressure, and the holy grail for newspapers everywhere is finding new sources of revenue. Few go as far as the Spanish sports daily Marca.**

When it comes to diversity, Marca has put its name on a sports bar franchise, animated cartoons, a sports journalism school, gaming, ticket sales, television and more. And it has applied for a gaming and gambling license as well.

“Why are we diversifying so much? We need to invest in something new, we need to find new business models in view of this scenario,” says Juan Hevia-Aza, Marketing Manager for Marca.

His presentation focused on how Marca is putting its brand on new products, including:

- Marca Sports Café, a sports bar that opened in Madrid 18 months ago and turned a profit at the end of 2011. The company plans to franchise the brand, expand first to other Spanish cities and ultimately to other countries as well. In addition to raising visibility and generating revenue, Marca Sports Café also provides a venue for Marca events.
- Marcaentradas.com, an online ticket sales site which has sold more than 100,000 tickets since it opened in November 2011. “Thanks to our strong image, we are a reference for ticket sales,” says Mr Hevia-Aza.
- Marcatoons, an animated cartoon series that presents sports news in a humorous way. “They always reveal certain secrets of each football club,” he says.
- A journalism school that offers a Masters of Journalism degree and generated 100,000 Euros in revenues in its first year. In addition to the academic degree, the school also offers professional workshops and seminars.



“Our motto at Marca is, ‘no risk, no gain,’” says Mr Hevia-Aza.

Is there any end to the diversification of the newspaper brand? Perhaps not. Under consideration is a website, Marca.com – in Chinese.

# Competing successfully with fan and official sports sites

**Gazeta Wyborcza is not only Poland's leading national daily; it also has 20 local editions and staff around the country. Those editions included sports sections – both in print and online – but they weren't working.**

"Before we developed Sport.pl/local, no sport section had traffic of more than 100,000 page views per month. There were no digital revenues. Seventy per cent of content came from the print section," says Marcin Gadzinski, Head of Development for Sport.pl, which replaced the local websites to great success.

The reason it worked? Gazeta Wyborcza recognised that other newspapers were no longer their main competition for sport.

"The real competition is fan sites, official club websites, message boards, Facebook groups," says. "Those are the places where local fans go to check news, to feel emotions, to talk about the games. We want to be more like them."

The first local version of Sport.pl was launched in and around Gdansk February 2011. "We brought our brand and localized it," says Mr Gadzinski. "We brought all the tools Sport.pl has – player stats, special scoreboards etc. for the local markets. And most important to us was local content."

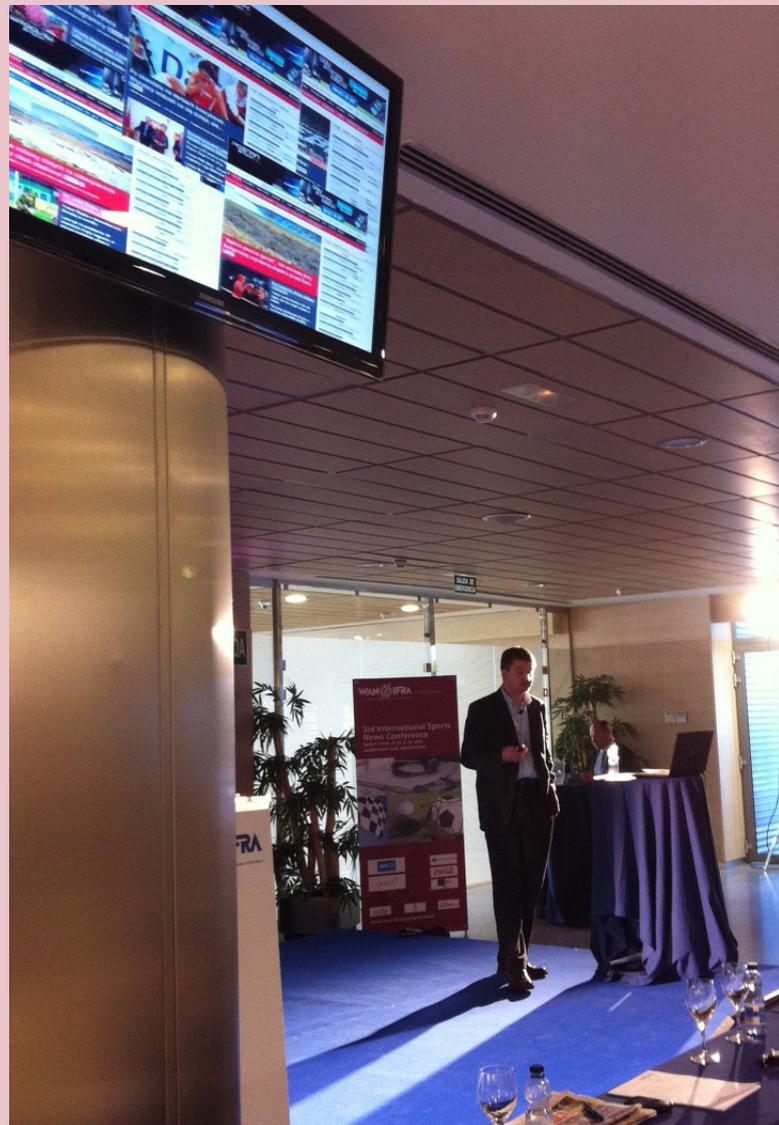
Other sites followed and local versions of Sport.pl are now found in seven other cities, with 10 to 15 million page views per month total, and new advertising contracts every month.

"For some reason, it was most popular with local car dealers, in city after city," says Mr Gadzinski.

The secret to success was to focus on just one team, or maybe two, but not try to cover everything – just cover the one team better than anyone else.

"This is not a newspaper anymore," says Mr Gadzinski. "On the internet you can't focus on everything you focus on in the newspaper. You have to pick, you have to focus, and provide the best coverage you can."

"No news about the club is unimportant," he says. "You can publish 10 or 15 stories a day about your club. Fan sites put every piece of content about the club on the web every day and this is the way to do it. Fans know they will never miss any information about their team if they come to the site. In the newspaper, you cannot do this. As someone said, the newspaper is broken if you don't have coverage of ALL local teams."



# Media and football working together



**As the former Managing Director of Archant Norfolk and a Board Member of the Norwich City Football Club, Stephan Phillips has a unique perspective on the relationship between sport and media.**

"For 300 years, there was no other media choice and the newspaper journalists were quite powerful," he says. "With social media and mobile elements, that's drifted away somewhat. The relationship that local media has with football clubs has to change."

Football clubs are now using social media, have their own websites, publish their own magazines, and going to the fans directly. And while the relationship with local media is facing challenges, there is still room for cooperation, he says.

"We're predominantly a local football club, so local relationships are important," he says. "We seek innovative ways to deal with local media. But the future is becoming more international, even for a local football club."

Here are some of the ways the Norwich City Football Club works together with local newspapers:

- Making club officials available to answer fan questions through the newspaper website. "That's really useful to connect with the fans, and the newspaper gets really good content."
- Joint products. When both local media and the club were producing competing football magazines, neither was profitable. But when a joint magazine and profit-sharing plan was created, both sides were able to make a profit.
- Events and community fundraising.

Mr Phillips acknowledged that the relationship between football organisations and media in large markets is even more challenged than those in smaller markets. "When you're in a big city and there are multimedia choices, as a media owner you just have to be better than anyone else," he says.

# Opposing restrictions on sports coverage

**“Is the only time we can get close to players is when there is a sponsor in the background?” That’s the question posed by Andrew Moger, Executive Director of the News Media Coalition, an organisation dedicated to safeguarding newsgathering in the world of sport.**

As sports organisations and their sponsors increasingly compete with traditional publishers by producing their own news and information and delivering it directly to the fans, they are also increasingly putting limits on how traditional publishers can deliver the news.

“Is news just a commodity and simply an asset?” asks Mr Moger. “Is it just a way of enhancing brands with no other role, no societal role?”

Given sport’s important role in society, clearly not. Independent reporting on sport is as important as independent reporting on all subjects of public interest.

“You can’t expect the English Rugby Union to highlight the gross mismanagement of their organisation last year like the Times of London has done,” says Mr Moger.

Mr Moger made a case for opposing restrictions that sports organisations place on media in exchange for giving reporters and photographers access to cover sports events. These have included restricting the number and timing of photos allowed to be posted on websites, banning reporting that brings the sport into disrepute, requiring media to turn over ownership of content to the sports organisations, and more.

“When the Premier League puts a time embargo on Tweeting onto websites, a format that has to be live and contemporaneous, we’re only allowed to deliver a second-rate product, while clubs deliver a first-rate product,” Mr Moger said.

For more on the News Media Coalition and its work, consult [[www.newsmediacoalition.org](http://www.newsmediacoalition.org)].



# How can you cover the uncoverable?

**The 2012 London Olympics won't be the first time the Telegraph covered a home Olympics – it happened in 1948. Things have gotten much more complicated since then.**

There will be 10,500 competitors, compared with 4,000 in 1948, and 302 events in 26 sports. There will be 130 world leaders in London, 1 billion people will watch the opening ceremony, and hundreds of leading business executives will also be there.

Coverage will be comprehensive and instantaneous. The BBC will be offering 21 concurrent streams. Twitter, which was in its infancy at the Beijing Olympics, has become a full-blown media force.

Ben Clissitt, Head of Sport for the Telegraph Media Group, describes the challenges of covering such an event this way: "It's too big, you can't cover the number of people, I don't know what stories will emerge, and they'll be on Twitter before I have a chance to publish anything."

Nevertheless, there is an important role and function for traditional media, and Mr Clissitt offers a thoughtful presentation on how newspaper companies can approach an event such as the Olympic Games.

Among his points:

- Newspapers can help "bridge the information gap." When it comes to most of the Olympic sports, "People don't know that much about them. People are really interested in them, but don't know a lot about them. We will try to make the reader and user comfortable at all times, make them feel like they really know what's going on. It sounds obvious, but you don't spend a lot of time doing it with most sports, because people know them."
- Newspapers can provide the narrative and offer an antidote to information overload. "At every point, the reader and user will know what happened on the previous day, why they should care about it and where they can find more information about it."
- Newspapers can be "liberated by impossibility." Since the Olympics is too vast to cover everything, and other media are providing comprehensive coverage, it frees newspapers "to just go for something you think is a good story, and do it big."
- Newspapers have the staff to do the job well. "You don't need experts," Mr Clissitt says. "Your journalists will produce great copy. We're all still storytellers."

"Connecting people to the basic things is what is going to be make a difference. Hopefully we'll offer something a little bit different, and people will want to come back to our side," he said.



# Sports PR and media: oil and water?



**Dan Connolly walked into the lion's den on Friday, telling an international audience of sports editors, journalists and sports experts how they can work better with PR people.**

Mr Connolly, Sports Public Relations Director for the marketing agency Havas Sports & Entertainment in the U.K., acknowledged that "It wouldn't be healthy to act as if we're on the same team."

While public relations people are trying to get publicity for their brands, and media have a different agenda, there are ways to improve cooperation to mutual benefit, he says.

"Brands and organisations have stories they want to share, things they want to promote, and media organisations want the best possible content to give to their audiences. So good content is always going to give us a point in common," he says.

Here are some of the areas that could lead to better working relationships:

- Know one another's disciplines.
- Meet as often as possible, but with a purpose.
- Look for "win-win" deals.
- Deliver on your promises.
- Be joined-up in your own organisation. "You editorial guys should know what the commercial people are doing," he says. "Without disrupting integrity, there might be ways where commercial and editorial can work together where everyone can benefit."
- Don't lie.

While technology and new platforms are changing the relationship between sports brands and media, they're still tied together in a fundamental way, Mr Connolly says.

"There are thousands and thousands of stories being told in different ways, every hour. But fundamentally, it doesn't matter how much technology changes, a good story is still a good story, and that will never change."