



Student-Athletes Partake in Media Training

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AMES, Iowa – For one day over 375 Iowa State student-athletes from all 18 Cyclone athletics programs, banded together to heed advice and gain guidance about one important aspect of their collegiate careers – working with the media.

Randy Minkoff, a partner for the Speaking Specialists in Chicago, Ill., helped provide training to a large group of student-athletes. He focused on interview body language, video posture, camera etiquette and safe social networking.

“For all of the groups we did an interactive program, calling up individuals to answer questions about current issues at Iowa State, the Big 12 and in the NCAA,” Minkoff said.

One of those individuals brought to the front of the group was volleyball player Kaylee Manns. The junior setter said that everyone made sure to listen to Minkoff’s words carefully.

“Everybody paid pretty close attention, because it was something that we all have to deal with as student-athletes,” Manns said. “He was very knowledgeable, and made us want to listen to him and take his advice.”

Along with his wife of 14 years, Sue Castorino, Minkoff has toured more than 100 colleges and universities, helping train student-athletes deal with the media spotlight in college, and after graduation.

Minkoff will be educating student-athletes in St. Louis, Mo. for the 2009 NCAA Women’s Final Four, and has provided counsel to athletes participating in the 2000 and 2004 Summer Olympic Games.

The programs he uses on college campuses are similar to the training he provides for U.S. Olympic athletes.

Iowa State life skills coordinator Jamie Hurst organized the seminar, which was mandatory for all Cyclone student-athletes. She has worked with the Speaking Specialists before, and holds Minkoff and his associates in high regard.

“This was something that really benefited every student-athlete present for the program,” Hurst said. “Nobody realizes how much they are exposed to the media. It will not only benefit the student-athletes now, but also when they graduate and get into the real world.”

With new internet communication sources abound, such as Facebook, MySpace and YouTube, Minkoff talked with the student-athletes about keeping negative media situations to a minimum.

“In the past two years we have really emphasized dealing with new media, specifically social networks, message boards and blogs,” Minkoff exclaimed. “But we are not just focusing on the high-profile programs like men’s basketball and football, but every team and student-athlete that represents the university in public situations.”

Another important aspect of the presentation that Hurst highlighted was the impact of the coaching staffs. She said that many people underestimate the influence that the coaches have on their players, not just on the field, but off the field as well.

“The coaching staffs here at Iowa State don’t get enough credit for what they provide their student-athletes,” Hurst said. “There are countless life lessons and leadership skills that are passed along.”

Overall, the Speaking Specialists were glad they made the trip from Chicago, and said that the response from the students was “excellent.”

"I found the teams very supportive of one another," Minkoff explained. "Especially when they were doing interviews and speaking in front of their peers."

As for Manns, she thought everyone in attendance was very receptive to the discussion, and that it was good to hear the positives and negatives of interviewing.

"Everyone was responsive and really made a point to listen to his (Minkoff's) words," Manns exclaimed. "I definitely will use what I learned later on in my profession."