Editorial Guidelines for Standards & Practices

- The purpose for these guidelines is the protection of ESPN's journalistic credibility across all platforms. The focus is on guidelines that, if violated, could alter the perception of our objectivity among readers, viewers and listeners.

- These guidelines will be most useful if framed as aspirational, not rigid rules. This is a starting point. These guidelines will evolve and will be reviewed and revised, as warranted, on a regular basis. The guidance provided by these standards & practices should not be the exclusive province of those who are journalists by title or degree – the utility is tied to the act of journalism.

- These editorial guidelines supplement employment policies in the ESPN Employee Handbook and will be referenced in talent contracts.

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Transparency

- Transparency is an important element of ESPN's editorial credibility and integrity. It can be measured in a number of ways, including responsiveness to viewer and user comments and criticism, willingness to explain editorial decisions, willingness to openly correct mistakes and openness about ownership and conflicts of interest.

- We will endeavor to explain to our audience and our critics how and why we make decisions with disclosure of relevant information.

- We will anticipate controversial topics, regularly schedule online chats with editorial decision-makers, offer interviews as warranted with editors or producers on ESPN.com and ESPN Radio, present explanations of controversial topics on ITK and offer the independent voice of an ombudsman.

- We will designate cross-platform transparency champions (including areas such as Communications, ESPN production, ESPN.com and ESPN Radio) who will be responsible for encouraging the commitment to openness and the importance of transparency.

- We reserve the right to be selective in our openness regarding personnel, privacy, human resources and legal issues.
Effective Commentary

LANGUAGE: Be clear in thought, concise in language and engaging in style. Separate fact from opinion, and choose the appropriate device for the argument (hyperbole, satire, humor, parody, outrage, tone, voice, diary, direct quotations, loaded words, etc). For example, satire can be very effective, but only when the subject is appropriate and you bring insight and wit to the exercise.

TASTE: Above all else, we are not in the business of personal attacks or ad hominem arguments. The tone should not be personal, vicious or dismissive. The value of the assertion must be based on authority and knowledge. Producers and editors must pay attention to ALL commentary and react quickly to errors in judgment (remove language, clarify or acknowledge errors in same show, alert necessary supervisors, etc.)

FAIRNESS AND BALANCE: Always be mindful of and sometimes even state the opposing argument. It will often serve to buttress your conclusion or point out areas of your argument that need support. Whom you choose to interview can impact balance and perspective. Distinguish between commentary/opinion and reporting. The “other sides” of an issue can come from other points of view from other people.

CONTEXT: In order to ensure that your argument is contextually relevant, consider:
- Recent developments (what’s known, what’s not known, what’s scheduled or likely to be known).
- Status of legal issues and the significance or relevance of prior conduct.
- Next expected developments (announcements, legal briefings, disciplinary action, etc).
- Denials, acknowledgements or statements from the principals.
- Clearly stated presumptive conditions (If “X” report it true, then my opinion is “Y”)
- The known facts. What are the credible facts that form the foundation for the commentary? Describe and document before criticizing or commenting.

TOPTICALITY: Make a connection between topic and timing. What is the hook? It should be relevant to what is happening. The topic must lend itself to comment. It must merit our time, space, resources and audience’s interest.

POINT OF VIEW: Be original and argue with conviction. Be passionate and accurate. Explain. The best commentary has a clear identity. The audience should know the opinion-maker’s prejudices, enthusiasms and obsessions. How well do you know your subject? What qualifies you to comment? Personal experience? Professional history? Interview experts? Connect a topic to experience and expertise — yours or someone else’s. Recommend a solution or outline a desired outcome. Insight and answers elevate the message.
General Reporting & Editing

• Disclosure: The process of journalism should be as transparent as possible. Journalists must identify themselves as agents of ESPN and be direct with sources about intentions. Journalists should not use deception in pursuit of a story except for extraordinary circumstances involving vital public interest. Any exception must be approved by senior management.

• Story review: We should avoid any agreement that would allow a subject to clear a story for publication, posting or airing. These conditions also apply to corrections. All exceptions to this guideline must be approved by senior management.

• Payment of sources: ESPN prohibits payment to a source for a story or news interview.

• Fabrication: We should not intentionally falsify or invent information, data, quotations, or sources in a serious journalistic presentation. Parody as method of criticism – using imitation or fabrication for a humorous or satirical effect – should be used judiciously and should be obvious to all or a substantial majority of the audience.

• Plagiarism: The unattributed use of others' creative work or reporting is prohibited. (While not a legal term, plagiarism is often cited in lawsuits as a violation of copyright laws and is generally defined as "The act of appropriating the literary composition of another author, or excerpts, ideas, or passages there from, and passing the material off as one's own creation.")

• Editing of interviews: All editing must be done in such a manner as to accurately reflect the spirit, context, tone, and reality of events and interviews. Editing must not distort an interview subject's meaning by taking words, phrases, or sentences out of context. It is incumbent on us to present the interview subject's best answer to any question or allegation, we should use particular caution when there is controversy or accusations.

• Objectionable material: ESPN broadcasts must be in good taste. Lurid, violent, or sexually explicit language or images that may offend the sensibilities of a significant portion of our audience should not be included in a broadcast unless they are newsworthy and deemed essential to the report.

• Brand name usage: Any time a product or brand name appears in our stories, we are treading on dangerous ground. Even if the mention appears to you to be innocuous, it will attract the close attention of the people behind that product or brand. This does NOT mean we keep brand names out of stories. It DOES mean that we must consider whether a brand name needs to be in a story. In most cases, it does not, and in fact should not. The brand of shirt, breakfast cereal, plasma TV or even car an athlete owns is almost always immaterial. The item in question can certainly be described to convey any implications (cost, style, garishness, fashion) you think are important. Most times, the best answer is to leave it out.
Sourcing

As our newsgathering operation grows, including not only our domestic television networks, but ESPN.com, ESPN The Magazine, ESPN Radio and local affiliates, ESPN Deportes and International among others, the need to make sure we are all operating with a consistent set of principles has never been greater.

Sources are the lifeblood of newsgathering, but by putting trust in them, we accept the inherent danger of reporting things we have neither seen nor heard first-hand. Our credibility depends on the reliability of our sources; we need to assure that our trust is justified.

Anonymous sources are a dependable and often necessary vehicle for reporters. Without the ability to make information public while not revealing the source, many stories of import to the public would simply go unreported.

We are not about to stop using anonymous sources. Nor are we about to abandon the practice of accepting off-the-record, not-for-attribution and on-background information. But given the current environment of scrutiny in which all large media organizations are operating, it is important to establish guidelines.

Off the record

"Off the record" is a term that means you can report neither the information you are about to be given, nor, obviously, the source off the information. It does not mean that you can’t try to obtain that information from another source.

Before accepting off-the-record terms, ask yourself a question: Is the agreement likely to compromise your ability to report a story? As an example, a source may tell you something off the record, and want to place stipulations on it. “I’m going to tell you who we’re going to sign, but you can’t report it until next Friday, agreed?” By accepting that deal, you’ve essentially taken yourself out of pursuing that story until “next Friday,” by which time others may have reported the story. You need to make it clear to the source that you must retain the right to confirm the story through another source.

An important point to keep in mind when accepting off-the-record material, is that it’s rare when there is only one source for a story. Your source may tell you that he will not speak to anyone else, but there are always others who will be aware of the details.

Reporters, analysts, and anchors should approach any conversation with a potential source of a story with the presumption that the conversation is on the record. As employees of ESPN, which has, among its primary purposes, the charge to gather and report sports news, your conversations with sources should always be considered on the record unless a specific and stated agreement is made in advance.

This creates often difficult circumstances, particularly when you may have, as is often the case in this business, a personal relationship with a source. If you feel the obligation to remind the source of the reporter/source dynamic, you should do that. But you should also know that your status as a reporter — and you all are reporters — doesn’t require you to make that point. Unless an agreement is made beforehand, our dialogue with a news source is always on the record.

Not for attribution

This implies that the information you are about to be told can be used, but you can’t identify the source. This is the device where “anonymous sources” come into play, and it has become, for those who question the media’s integrity — a growing faction according to numerous surveys — a red flag. Simply put, many people don’t believe what is being attributed to anonymous sources to be true. They believe it to be nothing more than a device for a reporter to make a point — or carry an agenda — by cloaking it in a way that can’t be challenged.

When using this practice, the information we are putting forth should always be substantive. That’s a subjective definition, of course, but here is an example of where I don’t believe an anonymous source should be used: “An assistant coach, who asked that his name not be used, said he believes Jerry Rice is two steps
slower than he was at his peak.” This information simply isn’t substantive enough – it’s merely an opinion -- to warrant the use of an anonymous source.

Always question the motivation of sources who want to remain anonymous. Are they using you to get a message across, rather than giving you information that is newsworthy? Do they have an agenda that you are now a party to? How have they come by the information they are giving you? Are they a first-hand source? If not, can they tell you the original source of the information?

The journalistic standard for reporting information is, of course, higher than it is for people in the sports industry – agents, front office workers, assistant coaches – passing along something they have heard. Press your source on how he knows what he is about to tell you. We have had some instances recently where agents have told our reporters information that ultimately proved to be either inaccurate, or impossible to defend when challenged. In our world, agents are often the most available of sources, and the most concerned with media attention. We should keep that in mind when filtering their information.

When using anonymous sources, we should always try, as specifically as possible, to characterize the relationship of the source to the story. If an assistant pro football coach gives you some anonymous information about the team, referring to your source as “one of the team’s assistant coaches,” is probably too narrow to assure his anonymity. But referring to the source as “someone who works for the team and is in a position to know,” adds credibility to the report.

Terms such as “I’ve been told” and “ESPN has learned,” should be used sparingly. We should give viewers as much information as we can about who has told us, and how we’ve learned it.

When possible – it often isn’t – you should discuss requests for anonymity with your producer, news editor, CP, or a senior manager.

For background

This term seems to have come into wide-spread use as an outgrowth of the White House and other federal government agencies gathering reporters to impart information ostensibly helpful in reporting out issues, with the understanding that the information can’t be attributed, and, often, can’t be used specifically. In that way it differs not all from off-the-record or not-for-attribution. Interviews that our analysts/play-by-play people conduct with coaches before games, on how the coach may conduct strategy, employ players, etc., providing the opportunity for more informed analysis during the game, might qualify as “for background.”

That sort of discussion serves a useful purpose. But a good practice before such a discussion is to make it clear that an “on-background” agreement is limited to a specific discussion, in a case like this, of how the game will play out, how the coach will make decisions, etc.

The agreement cannot be extended to information that we feel to be genuinely newsworthy, and we need to make that clear to the source before the conversation begins. For instance, if in the process of discussing the game, the coach should say “I’m going to announce my retirement after the game,” you shouldn’t find yourself in the position of having to sit on that information for four hours. People – coaches in this case – should be made aware that a session “for background” limits what won’t be reported.

Revealing sources to management

News organizations rarely seem to have a formal policy on this issue, and, except in the case of extremely important stories, rarely seem to demand the specific source from reporters. I’ve come to believe over the past few months, that this simply is not a good way to operate.

This is not a case of lack of trust. But, as has been evidenced whenever the issue of sourcing becomes public, or, in the extreme, a legal issue, the broadcasting/publishing entity bears as much responsibility as the reporter, and, in legal cases, likely a greater financial responsibility.

In cases where it becomes clear that no editor/producer/manager had direct knowledge of a source, the broadcasting/publishing entity finds its standards under attack, with readers/viewers questioning the integrity of the organization.
For this reason our reporters will find that we are going to be regularly requesting specifics on sources. There will be no intention to make the source widely-known within our operation. If you are asked to reveal a source, it will be by a news editor, a CP, or a member of senior management, who will keep that source confidential.

This should be a practice you are comfortable with. Just as we trust your reporting practices, you need to trust our intention and ability to protect your source. If some challenge should arise as to the veracity or existence of a source, you have someone who feels confident in supporting your report, knowing its source.

**Two sources, one source**

The notion of having two sources, one supplying the information, the second confirming it, grew out of the Watergate reporting, and no one would suggest that it is not a good idea. But putting a two-source requirement on stories would dramatically reduce the news we break and report.

The most important factor is the quality of the source. One source that has a reliable track record and can provide first-hand knowledge of a situation, is preferable to two second-hand sources, with whom you may be less familiar.

The more you can learn about how your source comes by his information, the ability to reveal your source to management, the understanding of your source’s motivation, are all factors in establishing a case that one source is sufficient to report a story.

And in reporting it, we should be as specific as possible. Steven Brill, the well-known media critic, made a point recently. “Reporters habitually and loosely use ‘sources’ when they mean one source.” It’s a good point, and we often do it to give the report more heft. If we have it from one source – which is usually the case – we should simply say that.
Attribution

Our credibility rests on the use of identifiable sources and information. When using information from wire services in local stories, reporters should give credit in the body of the story or in a tagline at the bottom. Similarly, when information from multiple wire stories is combined, sources should be attributed. An exception can be made for information considered widely known and in the public domain such as key historical events or the names of public officials.

- Attribution of news stories that have NOT been reported anywhere else:

We only give by-name attribution to our reporters on breaking news stories if it is clear that our reporter and ESPN had it first and only if the story rises to the level of making the Hot List (a story worthy of being reported on every show). It MUST be a significant story. And we take that attribution off immediately once the story has been announced or confirmed by a team, coach, players, agent, etc. Example: If Chris Mortensen is the first to report that Joe Jones has been fired as coach of the New Orleans Saints, then we should report that ESPN's Chris Mortensen is reporting that Joe Jones has been fired as coach of the New Orleans Saints. This is a story significant enough to be on every show and no one connected with Jones or the Saints has yet to confirm it. And again, we take that attribution off immediately once the story has been announced or confirmed by a team, coach, player, agent, etc.

If we can attribute the story to the news source -- the team, coach, player, agent, etc. -- then we shouldn't attribute it to ESPN or the reporter involved. Example: Joe Jones has been fired as coach of the New Orleans Saints, GM Frank Smith has announced. Or: Joe Jones has been fired as coach of the Saints, a spokesman for the NFL club has confirmed. Remember, we are giving ESPN and our reporter credit as a way to attribute an important story that has yet to be announced, NOT as a way to take credit for the story.

- Attribution of news stories that have been reported by another media outlet, but have yet to be officially announced:

Example: Ed Johnson has been fired as coach of the Chicago Bulls, the Chicago Tribune is reporting. If we decide to go with the story, we MUST give the media outlet -- the Chicago Tribune in this case -- credit as a way to accurately attribute the story.

We should immediately try to confirm the story ourselves using our reporters to call the team and other sources. If at some point, for example, Marc Stein of ESPN.com is able to confirm the firing after the Tribune story but before the team announced it, we should just report: Ed Johnson has been fired as coach of the Chicago Bulls, although the club has yet to announce the firing. If we add incremental information to stories based on our own reporting -- for example, confirmation of contract details or other trade elements -- we should credit our own reporters, but continue to give credit to outlet that originally reported the story.

Once the team has announced the firing, we should report: Ed Johnson has been fired by the Chicago Bulls, the team announced today. In some way we should make it be known that the club has announced the firing. It's official.
Civil suits

Our approach, for the past several years, in reporting civil suits that allege sexual abuse, sexual assault, rape, solicitation, etc., has been to exercise extreme caution, given that such allegations are perhaps the most damaging anyone can make to someone’s reputation, and that the filing of such suits require no legal standard. Some of the criteria we have considered in determining whether or not to report:

- Is there a criminal aspect to the case? Is it being investigated, has an arrest been made, have charges been filed?
- Does the individual have any previous history of similar behavior?
- At the time the suit is filed, can we reasonably believe it might have some on-the-field impact?
- Has the individual or his representatives — on their own initiative — spoken publicly about the suit?

If the story did not meet at least one of these standards, we likely did not report it, acknowledging that it was likely, within a short time, one of the standards may be met, or the story may get such wide distribution, essentially becoming such a big story, that any effort to refrain from damaging someone’s reputation, may be a moot argument, and we have then have to report the story.

While this approach has been referred to as “policy” in the past several weeks or so, as our handling of the Ben Roethlisberger story has been dissected, what I’ve outlined above is simply a set of guidelines we use when assessing these stories. While we try, and I believe have, maintained a level of consistency based on the guidelines, news judgment is always a factor, a practice that is difficult to define in exact language.

The landscape has changed fairly dramatically over the past few years, as both the volume, and along with it the influence, of the Internet — Web sites, bloggers, message boards, social networks — has increased significantly. Consequently, our guidelines regarding these types of suits need to be slightly revised, and made more specific in some areas. It should be noted, also, that these guidelines primarily have been considered in civil suits charging sexual misconduct. In more typical suits — a well-known player sues a well-known agent for mishandling his funds — we are more likely to simply report it.

In revising our approach, we will maintain a strong element of caution because it is the responsible thing to do. We will use the same four criteria noted above in determining whether to report the story immediately.

What will change is that we will put specific time benchmarks in place to revisit that decision, doing so every six hours. This does not mean we cannot revisit the decision to report/not report at anytime, based on developments, show deadlines, etc. But the six-hour benchmarks will force us to re-examine the decision on a scheduled basis, and establishing the timetable signals an intent to report the story at some point, based on the attention it is getting. Is it being reported in mainstream newspapers? Are large web sites, popular blogs, and radio networks reporting it?

Perhaps most significantly, is the Associated Press reporting it? Putting aside any debate on the quality of the AP’s news judgment, their feeds are automated on 4,000 media Web sites, including the two most trafficked news sites, Google News and Yahoo News. While an AP story should not be an automatic trigger, we should give it considerable weight.

In reality, as with all of these stories in the past, we have continued to assess them after the initial decision. When we decide to withhold, we should remind ourselves and, as warranted, the audience that this decision may not be permanent and that we reserve the right to revisit, based on circumstances.

As we make these decisions, we can do a better a job communicating them to senior management across platforms. To that end, we will construct a small distribution email list of senior managers we would like included, and alert that distribution as decisions are made. If someone wants to bring further thinking or points we haven’t considered to the table, they can certainly do so at any time.

Once the story is reported, there has been discussion over how we treat the story going forward. Given the nature of the story, there have been suggestions to limit discussion of the story, limit exposures on The Bottom Line, limit the incidence of reporting it on shows, how it is played on ESPN.com, etc. After considering a litany of possibilities, we’re best served treating it like any other news story, exercising news judgment as we see fit.
If we believe the story is worth reporting, we should, at that point, treat it like any other news story.

There should be general guidelines regarding discussion segments, and they’re quite simple:

- There should be no speculation about what may or may not have happened
- There should be no speculation on the mindset of the respective individuals
- It is reasonable to discuss what impact the story may have on how the individual performs, how the team is impacted, how play on the field/court may be impacted
- It is reasonable to discuss how fans and sponsors may react to the story, and/or what economic impact, i.e. endorsements, the story may have
- We should discuss legal possibilities, burden of proof and storyline timetables, as warranted

**Sexual Assault Charges**

As a rule, we don’t report the names of accusers in criminal sexual assault/rape cases, unless the accuser personally decides to make his/her name public. That guideline does not apply to civil lawsuits. If an accuser opts to file a sexual assault or rape suit in civil court -- regardless of whether the legal system has determined there is evidence to bring criminal charges -- there is no inherent right to anonymity. We will weigh each circumstance on a case-by-case basis, but if the civil suit meets our standards for reporting, in general, accusers in civil cases do not have the same privacy protection as in the case of criminal charges.
Reporting on Criminal Activity

Our general guideline is that out of fairness to a news subject we don’t report allegations of criminal activity against a news subject unless that news subject is charged with a crime. Our feeling is that unless authorities believe the allegations rise to the level of charges being filed that it is defamatory to the news subject on our part to report criminal allegations before authorities concur that in their opinion a crime may have been committed. When a person is charged with a crime, that is what the authorities are saying — that in their opinion this news subject has committed a crime.

This is only a guideline, and circumstances and common sense at times cause us to stray from that guideline and report allegations before charges are filed. When we do this, we make a point of emphasizing high in the story that NO charges have been filed against this news subject. Here are some reasons and examples when we have reported allegations against a news subject without charges being filed:

1. If authorities openly state they are seeking a news subject to arrest him or if authorities say the person will be charged on a specific date, we usually will report the story based on the fact that changes will be filed. At times, the actual filing of charges does not happen over a weekend, so if authorities say a person will be charged, that almost always prompts us to go with the story.

2. If a person has criminal past — Mike Tyson is a convicted rapist. We have, at times, reported allegations that women have made against Tyson before charges have been filed based on his past history. Again, we always mention that NO charges have been filed.

3. If a person or his attorney or representative openly speaks about the charges before they are filed as a way to get their side of the story out — if a news subject or his representative is going to openly speak about criminal allegations and thrust themselves into the public eye on this matter, it becomes our obligation to report what they are saying about the allegations even if they are not charged. For example, late in the 2001 football season, stories surfaced in the days after the University of Colorado’s football victory over Nebraska on Thanksgiving weekend about police investigating allegations of sexual assault against several Colorado football players, so much so that coach Gary Barnett held a news conference to address the matter. He wanted to be out front on the issues and address the police investigation. At that point, although none of his players was charged, we decided to report the story. One important point here, there is a difference between a news subject or his representative openly talking about criminal allegations and “no comment”. If we or another news organization asks a news subject or his representative about criminal allegations, and he says no comment or almost nothing, this doesn’t qualify as openly speaking and likely would not cause us to report the allegations before charges were filed.

4. If there is an event or statements by a league, team, player or other pertinent party that indicate the allegations will affect – or threaten to affect – something on the field of play. For example, in the several years ago, some media outlets in southern California were reporting that Angels pitcher Jarrod Washburn was being investigated for having sex with a minor. At first, we chose NOT to report the story when the allegations surfaced. He had not been charged, had no criminal history and wasn’t speaking about the matter. To report an allegation of this sort with no charges being filed would be quite defamatory to Washburn. However, the allegations became so widespread that the Angels, in a pennant race at the time, announced they were granting Washburn permission not to be at the ballpark for a particular game and said they did not know if he would make his scheduled start the next night. At that point, the allegations had the potential to affect the pennant race. The Angels’ best starting pitcher might have to miss a start because of the allegations. At that point, we decided to report them. Also, the Angels manager and general manager were forced to address Angels players about the matter in a closed-door meeting. With all of that, we felt we had to report the allegations. We were careful to report that NO charges had been filed. And we made a point a few days later to report that NO charges WOULD be filed when the district attorney’s office decided not to prosecute Washburn.

Again, in all cases when we report that a news subject has been charged with a crime, we owe it to that news subject to report just as prominently or more prominently when the charges are dropped or the person is found not guilty. And that goes even more if we report criminal allegations against a news subject before charges are filed. If authorities decide not to file charges, as was the case in the Washburn matter, we need to report that no charges will be filed as prominently or more then the original story about the allegations.

One other matter — We almost never report civil suits that allege criminal behavior against a news subject because if authorities have yet to decided or already have decided that the allegations do NOT rise to the level to produce criminal charges, then why report a civil action alleging criminal behavior? For example there have been many lawsuits against players alleging domestic abuse or lawsuits that allege assault against someone (fighting). We
normally do not report these because authorities already have decided that no crime has been committed or have yet to decide whether a crime has been committed. There are exceptions to this, too, and obviously the Kobe Bryant civil case was an exception. Given how widely the story was covered when criminal charges were pending against Bryant, it would be naive of us to refuse to report anything about a possible civil trial now that criminal chargers have been dropped against Bryant. We just had to be careful in any reporting of the civil case against Bryant to keep it in its proper perspective—that Bryant no longer was being charged with committing a crime.

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As a rule, we don’t report the names of accusers in criminal sexual assault/rape cases, unless the accuser personally decides to make his/her name public. That guideline does not apply to civil lawsuits. If an accuser opts to file a sexual assault or rape suit in civil court -- regardless of whether the legal system has determined there is evidence to bring criminal charges -- there is no inherent right to anonymity. We will weigh each circumstance on a case-by-case basis, but if the civil suit meets our standards for reporting, in general, accusers in civil cases do not have the same privacy protection as in the case of criminal charges.
Corrections

At ESPN, our reputation and credibility with viewers, readers and listeners are of paramount concern. While our goal is always to be accurate and fair, occasionally we will broadcast or publish an erroneous assertion of fact. Significant errors of fact should be corrected in a clear and timely manner. Our intent is to correct mistakes promptly and with appropriate prominence. Here are two criteria to determine if a factual error warrants a full correction:

- Did the error result in a substantive misrepresentation of the story?
- Was someone potentially damaged by the error?

To warrant a correction, the error must involve a significant factual mistake or materially change the implication or connotation of the reporting. Examples of these mistakes could be incorrect details of a trade, misattribution of quotes, inaccurate reports of criminal charges or an erroneous death report. They would not include inconsequential factual errors, such as minor statistical mistakes, inadvertent misidentifications, minor inaccuracies in a developing live story or font errors that clearly don't impair the viewers' understanding of a story.

While those examples are obvious representations of errors that do and do not require corrections, there certainly are numerous other instances that fall in the middle – judgment calls to be weighed against fairness, impact and accuracy. Generally, when in doubt, we should err on the side of making corrections.

ESPN also must guard against bias and distortion, which can sometimes be the result of improper emphasis or omission. There may be errors of fairness, when we omit an important element of information, don't fully report a story or offer an unbalanced view. These issues of fairness should be handled similar to significant errors of fact, with the same criteria applied.

Corrections should appear in a consistent place, appropriate to the medium, and their presentation should reflect the magnitude and importance of the original error. Acknowledging errors demonstrates accountability, and as a result, corrections should be clear, understandable and forthright, not defensive. Corrections should be crafted for the audience, referencing the original error and identifying the source or genesis of the mistake where appropriate.

Each unit at ESPN – such as Studio, Remote, Magazine, Radio, ESPN.com and other networks -- should determine a process for applying the aforementioned criteria and implementing corrections in a manner applicable to its medium.

As determined by each unit's senior managers, errors of fact or fairness across all media, as warranted, will be posted on ESPN.com’s corrections page for a specified period of time. In all cases, when errors are detected and corrected in broadcast programming, they must be corrected in digital versions of the same material in other media (e.g. broadcast clips on ESPN.com, or a transcript posted in online archives).

Corrections should be as timely as possible. In the case of continuous media such as TV, radio and ESPN.com, for example, we should make corrections within the same broadcast or production cycle. Corrections should reflect corresponding elements. For example, a significant error of fact or fairness in an opinion segment should be corrected in the same show segment.

ESPN produces 24/7 programming and services under fierce deadline pressures. Mistakes are inevitable. A meaningful policy for correcting significant errors will engender trust with viewers, listeners and readers. ESPN takes its reputation for accuracy seriously, and our willingness to correct mistakes as necessary is directly proportional to our credibility with our audiences. And while this document furthers our goal of transparency, as an ongoing concern, we will regularly review and amend the policy as warranted.
CORRECTIONS POLICY PROCEDURES FOR ESPN

ESPN.com strives to publish accurate information and maintain the highest editorial standards for accuracy and completeness in its reporting. It is our policy to correct errors if they occur, and we maintain a corrections page to allow users to review and report errors. Minor errors, such as spelling and punctuation, will be corrected as noticed or as stories develop. If we correct significant errors of fact or substance, or those that have a material bearing on a story, we will make the correction -- as well provide a notification -- on the original article. If you believe ESPN.com has published something in error, please E-mail us.

- All potential corrections will be vetted and posted by the ESPN.com News Desk. Corrections will be funneled to the senior news director or senior news editor on duty. In collaboration with the appropriate senior coordinator (from the section that originated the story), the news editor will make the corrections and add a link to the corrected story from a main corrections index page. Executive editors and the editorial director will be consulted on all corrections involving Material Changes. The executive editors and above may recommend legal counsel.

- Corrections will fall in three categories: Basic, Developing Stories or Material Changes.
  - **Basic corrections:** These corrections will be made on the story page as warranted, and will not require notification for users. These include simple typos, punctuation errors or inconsequential factual changes (such as minor statistical changes), and will be corrected when discovered and confirmed.
  - **Developing Stories:** Corrections in Developing Stories will be made as warranted, and typically will not require notification for users. We will observe a "24-hour rule" in which stories that are quickly evolving (such as breaking news, live event coverage or contractual stories in which details continue to evolve) will not be corrected, but simply written through with new and complete versions. These will be time-stamped. Even in these stories, however, significant factual changes will require notification. Any Material Change must be endorsed by executive editor or above.
  - **Material Changes:** Stories that require Material Changes will be corrected or clarified in a timely manner, and appended to include notification as to what content was amended. These stories require significant factual corrections or those that materially change the implication or connotation of the reporting. In these cases, the story will be corrected, and appended with a notation at the top that indicates "This story has been corrected. Read below for details." That message will anchor link to the bottom of the story page, which will carry a brief summary of the correction. These stories will be added to the master corrections page. Any Material Change must be endorsed by executive editor or above.

- ESPN.com, as warranted, will use the Corrections page to offer other notices, such as explanations of ethical concerns (i.e. errors of omission, errors of judgment, etc.), issues of fairness, technical problems or other issues that might interrupt access to the site or its features. Notices may also be posted about issues with photos or interactive features. All such notices will be approved by executive editors or above, in collaboration with appropriate managers across ESPN New Media.

- The corrections index page will be linked from global navigation and Page 1 of ESPN.com, and may evolve to include other user feedback and staff contact tools. As determined by the executive editors or editorial director, some corrections, clarifications or notices could command more prominent Page 1 presence (such as placement in spotlight, voices boxes or headline news lists).
CORRECTIONS POLICY PROCEDURES FOR ESPN STUDIO PRODUCTION

When errors are noted within shows:

When errors are noted while a show is still on the air, those errors should be corrected as soon as possible. It is within the purview of the coordinating producer or producer of the show to make these corrections. These errors may meet the criteria of a full correction, but more often they are likely to entail lesser mistakes that, because of an obligation to make the show as accurate as possible for those who are watching, should be corrected.

For example, if we report in BBTN that a pitcher gave up three hits in five innings, and, we realize, five minutes later, that he actually gave up four hits, we should correct the report within the show. This is NOT something we would correct 24 hours later on BBTN.

The process here should be very simple. Once the CP/producer is made aware of the error, he/she should direct the anchor to make the correction in the most appropriate way and time.

When errors are realized after a show is off the air

With rare exceptions, errors that will be deemed serious enough to correct once a show is off air, must meet one of the two primary standards noted in the ESPN Correction Policy:

- Did the error result in a substantive misrepresentation of the story?
- Was someone potentially damaged by the error?

If you are made aware of an error that meets one of these criteria, it should be brought to attention of the show CP or producer. If you are unsure if the error meets the criteria, BRING IT TO THE ATTENTION of the CP or producer. Senior management will make a determination on how it should be handled.

Show management should then bring the error to the attention of the senior show CP, a senior news editor, vice president, or senior VP. These people are empowered with determining whether or not a correction should be made.

Various shows, because of air schedule and regularity, will follow different guidelines once directed to correct an error:

**SportsCenter** – When an error is deemed to meet the corrections criteria, the correction should begin to air in the next original SportsCenter scheduled, and, in most cases, should air through a 24-hour cycle of SportsCenter. To the degree it is reasonable, the correction should run as close as possible to the same time, and, if applicable, within the same segment, in the show in which the original error was made. For example, if such an error is made in the PTI SportsCenter segment, and that mistake is realized at 8 p.m., the correction should begin airing in the 11 p.m. SC, and continue through the 6 p.m. SC, where it should be corrected within the PTI segment.

**ESPNEWS** – While the ESPNEWS shows are similar to SportsCenter, because of the amount and frequency – generally half-hour blocks – senior management will determine the frequency of the correction. It will always air in a similar position 24 hours later, and in the next news block after management becomes aware of the error. But senior management will make the decision whether the correction should air each half-hour, or with a lesser frequency that still seems reasonable in our obligation to viewers or those who are wrongly portrayed.

**Other daily shows** – Shows such as BBTN, NFL Live, PTI, Cold Pizza, etc., should follow the policy of making the correction in the next scheduled show, in roughly the same time spot and, if applicable, segment. If a show airs more than once a day, as is often the case with BBTN and NFL Live, the corrections should be made in all shows.

**Weekly shows** – Shows such as NFL Countdown, College Gameday, etc., would make those corrections a week later, but in many, if not most, cases, senior management is likely to determine that the error should also be corrected in a more timely manner. Senior management will determine the place and frequency, but in most cases, it will likely be SportsCenter, with a further determination on whether the error merits running
throughout the cycle. At times there may be other determinations that seem more reasonable. For instance, an error in Sunday NFL Countdown, might best be corrected in Monday NFL Countdown, given the similarities in on-air talent, subject matter, and high exposure of the show. Again, this will be determined by senior management.

Additional areas where errors will be noted:

ESPN newswire -- Show errors of a magnitude that meet the correction policy criteria should be submitted to the news editor on duty, who should include the correction on the Hot List, with specific detail on which shows should air the correction. As noted, these determinations will be made by senior management, and will also be transmitted verbally by senior management to the respective show unit managers.

On-line application -- Show errors of a magnitude that meet the correction policy criteria, will be noted on the ESPN.com Corrections page. When the decision to correct an error is made, senior management will, in a timely fashion, transmit the correction to the ESPN.com senior news director or senior news editor on duty. The detail should make the error and correction clear, and also note the show and date where the error was made. Please note: These corrections should be made as quickly as possible. As example, if, at 4 p.m., we become aware that an error that meets the Correction Policy has been made on Cold Pizza, and will be corrected in the next day’s show, we should make the ESPN.com correction as soon as possible.
CORRECTIONS POLICY PROCEDURES FOR ESPN REMOTE PRODUCTION

When errors are noted within games/events:

If an event or game is still on the air when the error is noted, the correction should be done during that event/game as soon as possible and in the most appropriate way. The producer or his/her superiors should have full authority to put the correction in motion. Some errors might not warrant a full correction (that is, a listing on the ESPN.com corrections page; see details below) but should be made to make the production of the event/game as accurate as possible.

For example, if we report on a Monday Night Football game that a QB has thrown seven interceptions for the season but he's actually thrown eight, the producer or CP should make the play-by-play person aware of the mistake, and that play-by-play person should correct it in the most appropriate way and time.

When errors are realized after a game/event is off the air

With rare exceptions, errors that will be deemed serious enough to correct once a game/event is off air must meet one of the two primary standards noted in the ESPN Correction Policy:

- Did the error result in a substantive misrepresentation of the story?
- Was someone potentially damaged by the error?

If you are made aware of an error that seems to meet one of these criteria, it should be brought to the attention of the event's CP or producer. If you are unsure if the error meets the criteria, bring it to the attention of the CP or producer. The CP or producer should then consult with senior management -- either the senior CP for the sport, the senior news editor for remote, vice president, senior VP or executive producer. These people are empowered with determining whether a correction should be made.

Because of air schedule and regularity, where these corrections will air will follow different guidelines:

Consecutive-day events (such as X Games, Little League World Series, NBA Finals and other tournaments on our air more than one day) -- When an error is deemed to meet the corrections criteria, the correction should air on the next live SportsCenter as well as during the next live event of that series at the spot most conducive to such a correction. For example, if we say during Wednesday's Game 3 of the NBA Finals that Shaquille O'Neal has broken his leg but it's announced at 9 Thursday morning that he twisted his ankle and should return for Thursday night's Game 4, the correction should run on Thursday's 6 p.m. SportsCenter and again at the appropriate time during Game 4's telecast.

However, if the error is significant to the event but the event itself is not of the magnitude to be worthy of a correction on SportsCenter (to be determined by the coordinating producer of the event and senior management), the correction should run during the next live airing of that event at the spot most conducive to the correction and should be repeated the next time the team or performer is on our air. For example: During the regional playoffs of the LLWS on Tuesday, we say that New Jersey's loss eliminates it from advancing, but in effect New Jersey still has a chance to advance. We should correct the error on Wednesday's first regional telecast -- even if it's a game involving the Northwest Regional teams -- and should repeat the correction the next time New Jersey plays. This likely wouldn't meet the standards of correcting it on SportsCenter.

All other events/games -- If an egregious error is made during the game and is not realized until after the game is over, the correction should air on the next appropriate wraps show (involving the same sport) and on the next original SportsCenter, with a further determination on whether the error merits running throughout the SportsCenter cycle or with a lesser frequency that still seems reasonable in our obligation to viewers or those who are wrongly portrayed. Depending on various factors (such as the amount of time between the error and the discovery of it), senior management might also deem it appropriate to repeat the mention of the error the next time the team or athlete is on our air.

Additional areas where errors will be noted:

ESPN newswire -- Game/event errors of a magnitude that meet the correction policy criteria -- and have been determined worthy of the correction by consultation between remote and studio senior management --
should be submitted to a remote news editor on duty. That person should compose the wording of the correction and send it to the studio news editor on duty, who will include the correction on the Hot List, with specific detail on which shows should air the correction. As noted above, these determinations will have been made by senior management with communication between remote and studio.

**Online application** — Game/event errors of a magnitude that meet the Correction Policy criteria will be noted on the ESPN.com Corrections page. When the decision to correct an error is made, senior management will, in a timely fashion, transmit the correction to the ESPN.com senior news director or senior news editor on duty. The detail should make the error and correction clear, and also note the game/event and date where the error was made. Please note: These corrections should be made as quickly as possible. For example, if, at 9 a.m., we become aware that an error that meets the Correction Policy has been made in that NBA Finals game from the previous night, and will be corrected in the next day’s game, we should make the ESPN.com correction as soon as possible.

Other game/event errors that fall slightly below the Corrections Policy criteria might still be serious enough to warrant a correction on the ESPN.com Corrections page. If you are made aware of an error, notify the remote news editors, who will begin the process with senior management of determining the seriousness of the error and the placement of the correction.
CORRECTIONS POLICY PROCEDURES FOR ESPN RADIO

If it is determined that a correction needs to be made to content delivered on the air, ESPN Radio Management will facilitate the correction in a timely fashion. Whenever possible, the correction will be given by the person that made the mistake and on the show that the mistake was made. When mistakes are made during SportsCenter updates, the correction (depending upon the significance of the mistake) will be made during a subsequent SportsCenter Report. If that person is not available, a pre-recorded announcement will be placed on the air before resuming regular programming. To warrant a correction, the error must involve a significant factual mistake or materially change the implication or connotation of the reporting.

Note the following programming areas where mistakes may occur.

- Talk Show Content – If an ESPN Personality gives incorrect information that must be corrected, then the correction will take place in a timely fashion during the talk show that the information was given. Management will reserve the right to place the correction on another show if necessary due to time restrictions.
- SportsCenter Content – If incorrect information is given during an ESPN Radio SportsCenter, then the correction will take place during SportsCenter.
- Play-by-Play Content – If incorrect information is given during an ESPN Radio Play-by-Play event, time permitting the correction will be given during the broadcast. If necessary, the correction can be given during a talk show.

The Senior Director, Senior Director of Programming and Sportscenter Editor will work together and coordinate the ESPN Radio Correction Policy. All employees will be instructed to contact the above personnel anytime they become aware of a mistake on the air. Each of the managers’ has the authority to execute a correction on the air and on ESPN.com. The Senior Director will discuss, review and update the corrections record at the weekly ESPN Radio Content Meeting. This meeting involves all managers from the Content Division and takes place every Tuesday at 12:30PM.

All ESPN Radio Production staff will be made aware of this policy at the monthly ESPN Radio Production Meetings. In addition, Program Directors at the ESPN Owned and Operated Radio Stations will be responsible for making sure Correction Policy is followed at each of the stations we operate. Bi-Weekly Conference Calls are held with the Program Directors, and the PD’s will be continually reminded of the Corrections Policy. They will also be instructed to send reports of corrections to ESPN Radio in Bristol, CT.

For all corrections, a written version of the correction will be placed on ESPN.com for a period of two weeks. In addition, the Senior Director of ESPN Radio will maintain a file of all mistakes/corrections for six months.
CORRECTIONS POLICY PROCEDURES FOR ESPN THE MAGAZINE

PROCESS

Queries from readers are flagged by The Post (letters) editor. He then informs the research director and the managing editor. Writers who receive requests for corrections from their sources must inform story editors, who follow the same chain of command. If the error is egregious, the appropriate executive editor and the Editor In Chief are informed.

The research department then verifies the credibility of the query. If an error is found to be credible, it is addressed as a correction/clarification in one of two ways: as a correction or letter in The Post, or by restating the information correctly on the appropriate department page (example: a incorrect item in a baseball notes column would be corrected in that column in the following issue). If The Post page is not included in an issue, a correction will appear in the following issue. The ultimate decision about which of these options to use lies with the editor in chief.

As warranted and at the discretion of the editor in chief, some corrections and clarifications may be placed on ESPN.com for a specific period of time.
Media Criticism

One overall consideration: ground rules are appropriate for the coverage of ESPN ought to extend to our coverage of all other media. This will help to ensure a sense of fairness and even-handedness in our media coverage. Coincidentally, it will also give us “fair” talking points in dealing with our colleagues at other media companies.

Finally, it goes without saying that this policy will help to ensure that there is “integrity,” as much as we can ensure that quality, in our dealings with all media.

1. We can always choose to interview a media expert – someone who covers the media for a living. The danger here is that the person conducting the interview can easily transition to commenting on the media, which is exactly what we wish to avoid.

2. Describe and Document. As distinguished from criticism and commentary. Direct quotation, video clips or description of what we see, read or listen to. Let the audience decide what they think about the presentation. The trick here is to make the description free of loaded words and images to give opinionated impressions.

3. Satire. There’s a high bar to hit here but it can be very effective as long as it’s not personal. No hidden meanings, codes or personal inferences.

4. Theory pieces on topics broad and specific. Clichés and language, replays, the role of analysts – citing examples (balanced) of how to and how not to.

5. Where appropriate present the opposing viewpoint and thoughtful rationale even when you don’t embrace it. Give perspective and context.

The reason for suggesting different approaches is to avoid the tedious media carping, bashing, nitpicking and swiping which have, unfortunately, too often become de rigueur for media commentary. These are practical ideas for coverage in this area

MEDIA GUIDELINES

Here are our guidelines when dealing with ESPN or other media in the news.

The subject matter for media coverage should merit our time, space and resources as well as our audience’s interest: All newsworthy topics are on the table. In other words, the topics we are dealing with have become part of the sports conversation.

The tone should be thoughtful, respectful and balanced when necessary. The tone of our piece/commentary must not be personal, vicious or dismissive --- no cheap shots. The form of commentary can go in many directions: interviewing a media expert for his/her views (not the views of the interviewer), satire, diary, documentary or pieces on the theory of a subject. No personal attacks, codes or innuendos toward people, media companies, networks or publications.

Finally, we insist that communication take place prior to any public discussion in any ESPN medium. We ask that you let the top person in your department know what you plan to do. Engage in a dialogue over the topic and the format and come to a resolution to accomplish everyone’s goals.

If an interview subject volunteers a media topic or opinion extemporaneously, please handle the diversion sensitively and intelligently. All we ask is that you follow the guidelines set forth here in leading the discussion.

Discussion regarding ESPN personalities, management, internal processes, external business should all be discussed prior to discussing on any platform.

Everything should be on the table as long as we have a thoughtful, balanced, factual presentation. This type of presentation mandates that a discussion be held with the production staff prior so we can make sure we are presenting all sides or presenting an intelligent, thoughtful point of view if warranted.
Social Networking

For Talent and Reporters

ESPN regards social networks such as message boards, conversation pages and other forms of social networking such as Facebook and Twitter as important new forms of content distribution. As such, we expect to hold all talent who participate in social networking to the same standards we hold for interaction with our audiences across TV, radio and our digital platforms. This applies to all ESPN talent, anchors, play by play, hosts, analysts, commentators, reporters and writers who participate in any form of personal social networking that contain sports related content.

ESPN Digital Media is currently building and testing modules designed to publish Twitter and Facebook entries simultaneously on ESPN.com, SportsCenter.com, Page 2, ESPN Profile pages and other similar pages across our web site and mobile platforms. The plan is to fully deploy these modules this fall to provide coverage of this content on ESPN domains.

Specific Guidelines

- Personal websites and blogs that contain sports content are not permitted
- The first and only priority is to serve ESPN sanctioned efforts, including sports news, information and content
- Prior to engaging in any form of social networking dealing with sports, you must receive permission from the supervisor as appointed by your department head
- ESPN.com will choose the sports related social media content that it will post
- If ESPN.com opts not to post sports related social media content created by ESPN talent, those individuals are not permitted to report, speculate, discuss or give any opinions on sports related topics or personalities on their personal platforms
- Understand that at all times you are representing ESPN
- Be mindful that all posted content is subject to review in accordance with ESPN's employee policies and editorial guidelines. If you wouldn't say it on the air or write it in your column, don't post it on any social network
- Exercise discretion, thoughtfulness and respect for your colleagues, business associates and our fans
- Avoid discussing internal policies or detailing how a story or feature was reported, written, edited or produced and discussing stories or features in progress, those that haven't been posted or produced, interviews you've conducted, or any future coverage plans.
- Steer clear of engaging in dialogue that defends your work against those who challenge it and do not engage in media criticism or disparage colleagues or competitors
- Confidential or proprietary company information or similar information of third parties who have shared such information with ESPN, may not be shared

Any violation of these guidelines could result in a range of consequences, including but not limited to suspension or dismissal.

We realize this is a fast moving space and recognize the guidelines will have to be assessed frequently and amended as needed. Thank you for your cooperation.
For All ESPN Employees

These guidelines apply to all ESPN employees who participate in any form of personal social networking. If you are
an ESPN talent, or reporter engaged with social media, please also refer to those additional guidelines.

ESPN understands that employees may maintain or contribute to personal blogs, message boards, conversation
pages and other forms of social media (such as Facebook and Twitter) outside of their job function and may
periodically post information about their job or ESPN's activities on these outlets. If an employee posts ESPN or job-
related information, they are required to exercise good judgment, abide by ESPN policy, and take the following into
consideration.

ESPN employees are obligated to be aware of and comply with any applicable provisions set forth in ESPN's
Employee Handbook and The Walt Disney Company's Standards of Business Conduct. Employees may not disclose
confidential or proprietary company information or similar information of third parties who have shared such
information with ESPN. ESPN's intellectual property, logos, trademarks, and copyrights may not be used in any
manner.

If an employee is engaging on external social media platforms personally, they should not use the company's name
in their identity (e.g. username, "handle" or screen name), nor should they speak as a representative of the company.
If a media inquiry is generated, please direct it to the Communications Department.

If you are an ESPN talent, reporter, writer, producer, editor or other editorial decision maker or a public-
facing ESPN employee, you are reminded that when you participate in public blogs or discussion activities, you are
representing ESPN just as you would in any other public forum or medium, and you should exercise discretion,
thoughtfulness and respect for your colleagues, business associates and our fans. All posted content is subject to
review in accordance with, ESPN's employee policies and editorial guidelines.

ESPN's Values expressly state that care and respect for employees and each other will always be at the heart of our
operations and that we are passionately committed to teamwork. Employees are responsible for acting in a manner
that is consistent with our company Values. To that end, employees are expected to be courteous, respectful, and
thoughtful about how other employees may be affected by postings. Incomplete, inaccurate, inappropriate,
threatening, harassing or poorly worded postings may be harmful to other employees, damage employee
relationships, undermine ESPN's effort to encourage teamwork, violate ESPN policy or harm the Company, which
may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. Employees bear full responsibility for the material
they post on personal blogs or other social media.

For purposes of this policy, a "personal blog" or "social media" includes personal websites and all forms of on-line
community activities such as on-line social networks, message boards, conversation pages, and chat rooms. If you
have any questions regarding this policy and its application, please contact either your manager or the Human
Resources Department.
Outside Activity

- **Freelance work**: Outside assignments must be discussed in advance with a supervising editor or producer to avoid conflict-of-interest issues. ESPN editorial staffers and contributors' chief responsibility is to produce work for ESPN and not for any competing media companies. Editorial contributors are allowed to accept outside assignments from non-competing media, part-time teaching duties and consultant work as contractually stipulated, but must be approved by ESPN in writing.

- **Speaking engagements**: Editorial staffers and contributors who deliver speeches may accept fees, honorariums, expense reimbursement and transportation, unless the engagement is for an entity ESPN regularly covers (e.g. leagues, teams, conferences). Contributors must report conflicts, and consult with senior management before accepting substantial fees.

- **Individual conflicts of interest**: We should not engage in outside activities or relationships that compromise the credibility or reputation of ESPN, pose a conflict of interest, or a reasonable appearance of such a conflict. We should not accept compensation for any services rendered to entities ESPN regularly covers, unless sanctioned by ESPN. It is the responsibility of staff members and correspondents to alert senior management of potential conflicts of interest.

- **Financial interests**: Employees should disclose to their department head any financial interests that might conflict or give the appearance of conflict in their ESPN duties. A staff member or contributor should not enter into a business relationship with a news source.
Political Advocacy

We should avoid active involvement or membership in any cause that could compromise our ability to report and edit fairly. ESPN discourages public participation in matters of political advocacy or controversy among editorial employees, contributors and public-facing talent.

There should be no endorsed support of a candidate or political position by any individual on any of our platforms, or in any other forum in which an editorial or public-facing staff or contract employee is acting as a representative of ESPN. Correspondents, producers, editors, writers, public-facing talent and those involved in news assignments and coverage must avoid being publicly identified with various sides of political issues.

Staff or contract employees who nonetheless involve themselves in political advocacy may be reassigned to avoid their handling of news, coverage or other topics related to that issue or other coverage that could be impacted by such advocacy. Common sense should be applied. For example, the limitation on political activity is not intended to preclude participation in a local school board election or appointment to a town council committee.
Presidential Election Coverage

At ESPN, our reputation and credibility with viewers, readers and listeners are of paramount concern. Our audiences should be confident that our news decisions are not influenced by political or commercial pressures, or by any personal interests. In order to maintain standards of fairness and impartiality, the following editorial guidelines regarding political coverage should be observed across all ESPN platforms:

**Interviews**

- In general, ESPN platforms fall outside the equal-time provisions that apply to television and radio over-the-air broadcasters. However, if interviews or other material involving candidates are used on ABC or ESPN Radio, they may trigger various equal time obligations in an election (the basic components of the equal time rule are below).

- Though ESPN's cable platforms, ESPN.com, ESPN The Magazine and ESPN Mobile are not bound by equal-time provisions, all platforms should still make every attempt to offer balance in tone, tenor and time/space allowed on ESPN for each candidate. Fairness should rule.

- We will forgo all interviews with presidential candidates until after the nominating conventions. All subsequent interviews should be conducted with balance and without bias. We will limit in-depth interviews to a total of one with each candidate for the following: ESPN TV, ESPN the Magazine, ESPN.com, ESPN Radio, and MNF.

- The location, interviewer, timing and format of such interviews must be approved by senior editorial management for each medium, and communicated to ESPN News Director Vince Doria, who will be the primary contact to facilitate and aggregate requests with the candidates and their campaigns. Vince must be made aware of all presidential election coverage plans, across all platforms. The goals are to coordinate all ESPN coverage, ensure consistency, eliminate redundancy and promote fairness.

**Coverage**

- Should a candidate appear at or attend a live event on our air (e.g. MLB game, college football game, etc.), announcers should avoid any political commentary, prolonged references to or live interviews with candidates. A brief mention accompanying video of the candidate is appropriate. If approved by senior news managers, interviews may be conducted or taped for reference or airing either later in the same program or at a later date.

- As it relates to news assignments, feature stories and profiles for each candidate or their campaigns, all platforms should make every attempt to offer balance in tone, tenor and time/space allowed. We should seek interesting and compelling stories that represent the points of view and experiences of both candidates on sports-related issues. If we generate a feature related to one candidate or campaign, for example, we should seek an equal-length feature related to the other candidate or campaign.

- Across all platforms, we should refrain from political editorializing and gratuitous references to the candidates, their campaigns or their political positions. This means no personal attacks or “drive-by” remarks in columns or on-air segments. Approved commentaries on sports-specific issues, or seeking responses from both candidates on relevant news issues are appropriate. However, sarcasm, one-liners, perceived endorsements, attempts at humor or political criticism should be avoided.

**Equal-Time Rule**

The essence of the equal-time rule is that if a U.S. radio or television broadcast station offers coverage of one political candidate, it may be required to provide an equivalent opportunity to any opposing political candidates upon request.

This means, for example, that if a station gives one free minute to a candidate in the prime time, it must do the same for his or her opponents, and if a station sells one candidate a 30-second non-preemptible spot in
a certain day part in a certain week at a certain price, it must be prepared to do the same for an opposing candidate who requests an equal opportunity.

However, there are four general exceptions to the coverage rule: if the air-time was 1) in a documentary; 2) a bona fide news interview; 3) in a regularly scheduled newscast; or 4) an on-the-spot news event.