

Opening Remarks
Sports Marketing
February 10, 2004

THE NEW YORK TIMES - Jill Agostino, Sports Assignment Editor: Usually I'm the first one in the office in the morning, so I'll pick up the phone. Just an FYI: It's really bad for someone to ask, "Can I talk to someone who knows sports?" That usually doesn't go over very well. But basically what I do is when I'm coming in in the morning I'll read USA Today, The Times, Post, News and Newsday and at how they cover the various events so once I get into the office I can start calling our reporters. I'm sort of the gatekeeper for the department and I'll just talk to different writers. This morning, for example, the Daily News had a great story, Roger Rubin, who looks like he wrote the entire Daily News Sports Section this morning, had about five bylines, but on how ESPN is perhaps in talks with Big East officials about maybe not televising the UConn-St. John's game after what happened with St. John's because one of the worst things they wanted was to talk about the scandal for two hours while they talked about the game. We hadn't had any of that and so I had to call reporters and say, "Hey can we get somebody, does somebody know something about this?" So that's a lot of what I do. I also take the calls when you guys call in pitching us stories.

I'm a big email person, I love emails and I'll often tell you guys that because we'll have three or four phones ringing at the same time so if somebody calls and says, "Oh, can I talk to you for five minutes about this?" I think, "Oh, can you just send me an email?" Give me a real quick pitch, send me an email and then I've got it right there. I can print it out and talk to my bosses about it.

Also, I try really hard to get back to everyone. It may not be the answer you want, but at least just saying, "Sorry, this is not something we're interested in." In terms of what we're interested in, it's different stuff. If it's just going to be an athlete with 20 or 25 reporters around there's not much different that we can get out of that. So that's not necessarily something that I'm going to send a reporter to. But if there's something different – last summer a woman had sent me an email about the women from A LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN were going into the inner city in L.A. and working with young girls, teaching them how to play softball. That was something that was different, it didn't involve a major athlete or anything but we sent someone over and it ended up being just a great story. Especially in the middle of summer when it's really slow. And timing is everything, too, something that one week may be a really great story but it's Super Bowl week - the week after Super Bowl week it's a much better story to us.

If you've noticed, too, we have a new regime at the Times, we had a little situation called Jayson Blair that you may have all heard about, and so things have been changing. And we're all still kind of adjusting a little bit, but one thing that did carry over from the old regime is that we are trying to go a lot more national. Not that we're ignoring the main beats or the great things that are happening in the City, but we're not shying away from covering things national. It doesn't have to have a local spin for us, so if you've got national stuff, that's going to be different from what a lot of papers in this area are going to offer.