

How to Advertise Outrigger Races - CARE AND FEEDING OF MEDIA

By Florida Town

There are several different types of media that you can approach. Print media comes in two flavours: Community newspapers (best) Larger newspaper (nice, but hard to get). Radio is good if you can make contact with a morning show, afternoon show or evening talk show host. They are constantly searching for interesting guests and unusual topics. Commercial television is great, but you have to have something unique to offer, and you have to compete with news from around the world. Community television is much more receptive and often works with high school or college students to prepare, shoot and edit programs.

ALWAYS send the top three winners in each category to the Vancouver Sun at sunsports@png.canwest.com In the subject line, enter 'Outrigger race results'

ALWAYS send results to the Province at sports@canwest.com In the 'subject' line, enter "For Province Agate"

Agate is the six-point (small print) listings, but that's okay. It gets us in print and if we are regularly listed in the six-point stuff, we can move over to the bigger print section once the sports media becomes more aware of our sport.

Radio

Radio talk show hosts have hours and hours of time to fill. They're always interested in interesting stories and something a little off-beat is very welcome. Contact the station to get off-air phone numbers for the talk show hosts. Take a couple of paddlers with you. Talk about races, talk about training, talk about the sport in general. And try to convince them why it's a good idea to go out in a little boat on a windy day in January.

Television

TV sports are very difficult to crack. They are consumed with professional sports tied up with sponsorship, advertising and money. That doesn't mean you shouldn't try, but it can be a long shot. But with Penticton looming, we can promote outrigger as a world level sport.

Jericho did a great job in convincing a TV station to do the weather forecast from the race site during the Jericho Iron. It was just background matter, but any exposure is helpful, and the event was mentioned during the forecast.

Community newspapers

Smaller papers, published one, two or three times a week and sometimes daily, that focus on local events. They are often free papers, delivered to everyone in the community. Check with the sports editor and ask about their deadlines.

Get a contact - it's easier if you deal with the same person each week. Ask if you can e-mail race results. It's quicker, they don't have to re-type the information and there is less chance of error or typographical errors.

Prior to each race – two or three days ahead of time – send a note to the sports department advising them that there will be a race that weekend, what kind of race it is (sprint, distance, iron, change) where it will be and what time it will start. If the race is at your club, great. If it's somewhere else, tell them that XX members of your club will be competing, and give their names.

After the race – as soon as the results are posted – copy them down, sprint for home and send them in to your contact.

NB: This applies to races in your area, or anywhere in the world. If you have paddlers doing Nanaimo, Molokai, Catalina, or Australia, let your local media know. Invite them to watch a training session. And again, make sure one of the paddlers sends you the results as soon as they are available.

Format:

Two short paragraphs are usually enough to give the highlights and a little colour. This is followed by the complete race results.

John Watson, of Eagle Rock Outrigger Club, led a field of 52 paddlers with a winning time of 1 hour, 2 minutes and three seconds for the 20km Round the Rock challenge.

From there you can add details about other outstanding performances, unusual events, or anything newsworthy.

If your club paddlers don't win the event, you still name the local paddlers first. John Watson, of Eagle Rock Outrigger Club, placed fourth in a field of 52 paddlers, two minutes off the pace set by Cam Golden of the Outdoor Outrigger Club, with a winning time of 1:2.3.

Golden was the 2006 CORA (Canadian Outrigger Racing Association) Cup winner.

If you have a picture, send it along. But take a good look at the kind of pictures your local paper carries, to get an idea of what to send. It must be in focus. It must show something clearly. A blur on the water that may or may not be an outrigger canoe isn't going to get published. If you can ride in one of the official boats and get good action shots during the race, wonderful. Pick the best one, identify individuals and jpeg it in along with your copy.

NB: You need permission from parents before you print the names of juniors. It's easiest to pre-arrange this by including a consent line on the race form that the guardian must sign.

Make sure your name and your phone number is included on every release you send in. Traditionally, it's placed on the lower left hand side of the page, and written:

Contact: Sally Sheridan, 604-515-5555 SaSher@yahoo.com

Make it as easy for someone to contact you for more information or for clarification.

Send in results from every race your paddlers have entered.

Once you have worked with a sport staff member, invite them to watch a race, watch a practice (water changes are great) travel in the coach boat or even climb in a six and paddle with a select team. This gives them more insight into the sport, and also provides the basis for a feature story someday.

Points to remember:

As paddlers, we know what FCRCC and JOCC mean, but the general public doesn't. The first time you use one of these acronyms, spell it out in brackets. After that just use the acronym. Next time you file a story, follow the same procedure. Do not assume that anyone will remember that CORA stands for Canadian Outrigger Racing Association.

If you mention a V1, specify that it is a rudderless race. The first time you refer to OC1, spell it out as a solo outrigger canoe. OC6 as a six-man outrigger canoe. If you use the word 'huli' explain what it means. Its fun to use some of the lingo, but make sure the guy who's never been in a canoe knows what it means too.

Getting coverage for a sport no one has heard of isn't easy, but it can be done if you are consistent, persistent, and persuasive.

Daily Newspapers

Dailies require the same treatment, but the time-lines are shorter. Check for deadlines and make sure you meet them. You're bucking heavy competition in the daily papers, because they are tied up with professional sports, with the need to sell advertising, and with big budgets. But that doesn't mean you can't get space in the Sports in Brief or in the 6pt summary.

Read the papers carefully, and watch the way they write the first paragraph of their stories. Try to follow that style, so your story will slip in easily and not require a great deal of re-writing. The rule of thumb for newspaper stories is 'who, what, where, how, when and why' to be mentioned in the first paragraph, but sport writing is a different world, more closely akin to feature writing which starts off with a 'hook' – an interesting statement to grab the reader's attention. The other information is still needed, but it is worked into the story further down.

SUMMARY

- Tell them the race is going to happen
- Tell them what happened as soon as the race finishes.
- Be concise, be accurate, and spell paddler's names correctly.
- Provide colour if you can – anything out of the ordinary, special paddlers, unique events, have background information handy on course records or outstanding performances. If tides and wind are factors, mention that in your story.
- Don't fret about yesterday's coverage, or lack of it. Just keep in there.

I have talked to both the Sun and Province sports editors and they are very interested in feature stories about our sport. If you have any ideas, any special paddlers, any special events, please let me know and I can contact them directly, and ensure that they get a steady trickle of information rather than have everyone call in at the same time giving them ten good ideas, of which they will discard nine.

Here are a few community newspaper sport department addresses. Again, if you can take a minute to make personal contact with the editor of the paper in your area, you have a much better chance of getting into print.

North Vancouver Scooper@northshoreoutlook.com

Tri City News , sports editor Larry Pruner sports@tricitynews.com

Burnaby News Leader Sports@Burnabynewsleader.com

West Ender, Michael White, editor Editor@westender.com

Richmond Review, sports editor Don Fennell sports@richmondreview.com

Now News sports@thenownews.com

Any questions? Contact: Florida Town floridaantown@yahoo.com