

Can media compete with sport?

MADRID, SPAIN / PARIS, FRANCE / DARMSTADT, GERMANY: 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 gathered in Madrid last week to discuss how they can successfully compete with these new challengers.

A report on their discussions can be downloaded, without charge, [here](#).

"The real competition is fan sites, official club websites, message boards, Facebook groups. 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," said Marcin Gadzinski, head of Development for Poland's Sport.pl.

Matt Kelly, publisher of *Mirror Digital* in the United Kingdom, agrees. Sports are not only "playing in a space we previously owned", they're often doing it better, he said.

When that's the case, it helps to emulate what they're doing well.

Rich content

Ronaldo's nearly 42 million Facebook fans and 8 million Twitter followers find rich content through their social media relationship - exclusive content on a daily basis, 'sport-tainment' in the form of games and Apps, contests and other incentives.

"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.

Fan sites focus on just one team, which is something that newspapers can also do on the web. "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," said Gadzinski.

However, even if traditional media provide more compelling content, they often find themselves on an uneven playing field. As sports organisations and their sponsors increasingly compete with traditional publishers they are also increasingly putting limits on how traditional publishers can deliver the news.

"Is the only time we can get close to players is when there is a sponsor in the background?" asks Andrew Moger, executive director of the News Media Coalition, an organisation dedicated to safeguarding news gathering in the world of sport.

Increasingly restrictive

Sports organisations are increasingly putting restrictions on news media in return for offering sports writers 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," Moger said.

Executive summaries of all presentations from the 3rd International Sports News Conference, organised by the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), can be downloaded, without charge, [here](#).

WAN-IFRA organises more than 60 annual conferences, seminars, workshops and other events to help newspaper and news publishing companies find strategies for success in the modern media age. For more on upcoming WAN-IFRA events, go to <http://www.wan-ifra.org/events>.

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