



THE Social Side OF ICE

The Effective Use Of Social Media Has Become A Game Changer From The Grass Roots Up To The Big Leagues // By TRISH BRADLE

Take a look around the rink and count how many players, parents and even coaches are on their cell phones or tablets. There is no doubt we're living in a wired world.

Whether it's Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or Snapchat, social media can play a valuable role in elevating an athlete's or a team's online presence by allowing them to connect with fans.

And while the nuances of social media may still be foreign to some old school coaches, many are finding that it's a valuable tool for communicating with current players, prospective recruits and fans.

"The one thing we have to do as coaches is to be knowledgeable about the athletes in our locker room who are much dif-

ferent than the ones who were there eight to 10 years ago. We as coaches have to be equipped to deal with them on and off the ice and live in their world," said Mark Johnson, who enters his 14th season as the head coach of the University of Wisconsin women's program.

"Even though we might be from the old school and have our ways of doing things, we have to be willing to adapt to these young athletes who are presented to us today."

And tapping into the power of social media is an effective means of getting that message across through a medium that continues to evolve.

"If you're not using social media, you're behind the times," said Derek Schooley, head coach of the men's hockey team at Robert Morris University. "It's important that

we use social media, but it's important that we use it wisely."

Four years ago, Schooley invited the public relations director from the Pittsburgh Penguins to speak to his team. He used examples of what people have done in social media that works well and what doesn't. He even used examples of players on the team and pointed out things that didn't seem appropriate.

Schooley said that his players have done a good job of embracing the message and incorporating it into their daily lives.

"In our media releases we use their Twitter handles to make sure we allow people to access our players," Schooley said. "But, we also have to make sure it's done responsibly. Because once it's out there you can't delete it."

Responsibility is a common theme that coaches stress when they address their teams about the positives and pitfalls of social media. Just as coaches work with their players to develop skills and learn team systems, they also need to teach their players what

is expected from them when it comes to social media.

"I believe that this is the world that the kids we're dealing with live in," said Tom Anastos, the head coach at Michigan State University. "It's there, it's in front of you and it's all around you. How can you learn to manage it?"

Anastos has created a set of guidelines that his players need to follow, such as no trash talking opponents, not associating themselves with inappropriate tweets, not saying anything you wouldn't say at a public press conference, and not posting things that you wouldn't be comfortable showing to your mother.

In general, Anastos said his players have taken his message to heart. Still, there have been instances where he has seen a post he didn't like, but rather than make a player take it down, he uses it as an opportunity to teach them to think twice before pressing Send.

"I'm trying to educate them," Anastos said. "You're representing the program,

but you're also representing yourself, and people can form opinions on what you say and how you say it."

Social media can also give players the opportunity to connect with a broad audience. For fans, it's a chance to get to know a player on a more personal level. Tweet to a player and there is a chance they will reply to you, or at least see it.

"In athletics, fans can connect with players in a way they could never connect before," Anastos said.

With that increased access comes greater responsibility to exercise caution in what information they put out there.

"These are college students," Schooley said. "I'm sure they enjoy their time away from the rink, but not everyone and their brother needs to know what they're doing."

Many of those same benefits trickle down to the youth hockey level, where coaches, team managers and league administrators can better communicate with players and their parents.

In a matter of minutes a coach can post schedule changes and practice plans. And team managers can post recaps and photos, which allows family and friends to feel more connected during the season.

Johan Bollue, instructor with the IIHF's Learn To Play Program, recently gave a presentation at the North American Rink Conference and Expo in Columbus showing coaches and hockey directors how easy it is to tap into the power of social media to improve their own local programs. In his home country of Belgium, Bollue has taken to Facebook and Twitter to promote the game to previously untapped audiences in a cost-effective way.

He finds that for many coaches the biggest hurdle is getting over the fear that they need a computer science degree to produce a photo gallery or post a video.

"It's too easy not to do it," Bollue said. "It's free advertising; why wouldn't we use it." ★

Do's and Don'ts of Social Media and Hockey



Do:

PARTICIPATE

- Social media is a great way to promote your program and keep the information flowing. Plus, it's free.

EDUCATE

- Make sure your players know what you expect from them when it comes to social media.

CONNECT WITH FANS

- Make your fans feel like they are part of the team by replying, retweeting, or favorite/liking what they post — as long as it's appropriate.

Don't:

TRASH TALK

- Let your play on the ice do the talking. No need to provide opponents with electronic bulletin board fodder.

AIR DIRTY LAUNDRY

- Some things are just better left unsaid. Remember, once it's out there you can't take it back.

USE VULGAR LANGUAGE

- Save the locker room language for the locker room. Don't say anything you wouldn't say in a press conference or in front of your mother.



WIN MORE GAMES!

Easy, Meaningful, Video Analysis...
For Hockey!

Double Blue Sports Analytics



Teams



Goalies



Camps

doublebluesports.com

[@doubleblue360](https://twitter.com/doubleblue360)

[double blue sports](https://facebook.com/doublebluesports)



DALLAS STARS

TOURNAMENTS

ADULT TOURNAMENTS

DEC, MAY, & JUNE

YOUTH TOURNAMENTS

NOV, DEC, JAN, FEB, JULY

FOR INFORMATION, VISIT
DALLASSTARS.COM/TOURNAMENTS