

## COMMENTATOR AND INTERVIEWER BRIEFING

### Introduction

The Charter for the Broadcast and Sponsorship of School Sport in New Zealand was developed “To support the health, wellbeing and development of secondary school students in New Zealand sport”.

It upholds and advocates the following values:

- Students’ enjoyment and positive experience in sport is the number one priority in all matters relating to sponsorship and broadcasting in this context.
- Secondary School sport is about celebrating all sports, genders, groups and schools equally, and does not focus on winning and success but, rather, on students enjoying the experiences and challenges that go with competing fairly against their peers.
- The promotion of equity and participation for all school students across New Zealand.
- NZSC supports and endorses the current School Sport NZ ‘Integrity Framework’, Sport NZ’s current ‘Keep up with the Play’ and ‘Balance is Better’ initiatives, and positive parental behaviour and support, and will make every effort to align any sponsorship and broadcast messaging with those fundamental values.

### General principles

Commentary on secondary school sport on Sky Sport Next should be consistent with and help advance the above perspective and values. The aim is to create an environment where sport and athletes are celebrated, participation is focused on more than just winning, and commentary messaging is a key part of achieving that intention. A major purpose is to enable sports to gain visibility whilst not placing undue pressure on athletes by celebrating sport and participation over outcomes.

- We want to ensure that secondary school sport and athletes are showcased appropriately and respectfully given their age and stage, in a positive and professional manner.
- Irrespective of the level/nature of sport, commentators should maintain a positive, respectful dialogue/narrative at all times.
- We encourage the focus of Secondary School sport within NZSC member-run events to be framed around celebrating key values (such as honesty, respect, fair play) and highlighting health and wellbeing and the other wider benefits that come from sport (vs. just valuing outcomes like winning). This theme should be evident throughout every event commentary.

We expect you as commentators to please adhere to this briefing when you are commentating a secondary school event for Sky Sport Next. Effective commentating requires you to be Authoritative, Analytical and Entertaining at the same time. The first two will be supported by your research and preparation – the last one will be based on your enthusiasm for and enjoyment of what you see played out in front of you.

A very important responsibility lies with the Principal Caller (First Voice) as they set the tone and the standards.

An acknowledgement of the above expectations is important, and should you have questions about or require support on these matters please get in touch (see below).

## Preparation

- Familiarise yourself with the [Charter](#) and its relevance to commentary and interviews.
- Familiarise yourself with supporting material that could contribute to your positive commentary narrative, e.g. [‘Balance is Better’ \(Sport NZ\)](#), [‘Keep up with the play’ \(Sport NZ\)](#)
- Familiarise yourself with athlete name pronunciations – *pronouncing names accurately in the present social media age is under intense public scrutiny and is very important. Ask someone from the sport who knows about the pronunciations if you need anything clarified.*
- Research (or ask the sport) any statistics, stories or information celebrating diversity and participation that would contribute to your commentary.
- Ask your contact at the sport/event organiser if they have other meaningful guidelines or information relevant to the principles stated above that would be helpful to build into your commentary.

## For Commentators

There is a balance to achieve between accurately calling the game/event in your personal style and making it interesting and engaging for the viewer, without passing judgmental comments or putting inappropriate pressure on young athletes.

Commentary should always be positive, supportive, and promoting of balance in sport. Negative or judgemental comments should **never** be made about students competing. The highest consideration should be given to the students’ wellbeing and recognition of how they might feel hearing any comments made.

Please adhere to the following guidelines when commentating on secondary school sport for Sky Sport Next:

- When mistakes are made in the field of play, do not focus on the performance of any particular athlete who might have dropped the ball, missed the turn, etc. At no time should you highlight an individual’s mistakes – all comments should seek to promote and celebrate individual or team performances.
- If there is an embarrassing incident on the side-line (e.g. supporter/coach behaviour), do not draw attention to it in your commentary. Instead, you could highlight positive behaviours and examples of good sportsmanship where you identify these.
- College sport is saturated with individuals who possess incredible talent. However, we do not just focus on such individuals alone or place unnecessary expectations on students through labels or defining descriptions e.g. “This girl is amazingly talented and will be the next superstar”.
- Commentary should have a strong focus on values of effort and endeavour, sportsmanship, and fair play, over any single focus on outcomes and results.
- Please be mindful that a success for one athlete/team may come at the expense of a mistake on the other side, so try to highlight the success without focusing on the mistake.
- Commentary should always respect coaches and officials, as well as students.
- If there is a serious injury on field of play, the camera will cut away or cut directly to an ‘ad break’. During such a cutaway, do not dwell on the incident.
- There will not be any broadcast of performance data (beyond simple timings/rankings) of student athletes participating, so please stick to this information only in your commentary.

- The broadcast will focus on competitors aged 15 and over. In some open events, athletes under that age might be involved. Ask your contact with the event organiser whether there are U15 athletes competing in the event and, if so, please do not draw particular attention to those younger athletes unless absolutely required in the narrative of the event.
- Please draw on themes from 'Balance is Better', 'Keep up with the Play' (see links above) where you can.
- Please consider your commentary from a diversity perspective (cultural, gender, geographical etc), and be as inclusive as possible.

In addition to the above:

- Please always refer to the full name of the event, including the naming sponsor if there is one.
- Be familiar with sponsors and partners of the event where relevant and periodically mention them in the commentary to help the sport give due exposure to their partners.
- Promote the 'Sky Sport Next YouTube Channel' as the place to watch and follow more of the sport and encourage viewers to subscribe.
- Promote Sky Sport Next social media (Facebook and Instagram), encouraging viewers to follow the action via those channels.
- Nothing should be said directly or indirectly that would put the sport, broadcaster, sponsors or other partners into disrepute.

## **For Interviewers**

### Organising interviews

- Where practical, organise interviews with athletes as early as possible (this could be done via their coach or team manager, or facilitated by your contact within the sport).
- Offer for a parent or guardian (or similar) to be present during the interview if the athlete wants it, so the athlete feels supported.
- Where possible it is preferable to pre-record the interview and, if so, inform the athlete that it is not going live.

### Interviewing

- Always ask athletes for their agreement to participate prior to being interviewed e.g. "There is no obligation at all, but would you be open to doing an interview?"
- Interview questions should strike an appropriate balance between performance efforts and resulting outcomes.
- Where possible prior to the interview, have a quick chat with the athlete about what will be asked and encourage them to consider their responses so they are already prepared. Stick to the topics that have been briefed to the athletes in advance.
- Keep wording positive, with balanced comments on what went well or what might be work-ons.
- Some example questions may include:
  - o "What did you enjoy most about today?"
  - o "What has been your favourite part of the tournament?"
  - o "What did you learn from today?"

- [For a team sport] “How does it feel celebrating your efforts with all of your teammates?”

In line with initiatives such as ‘Balance is Better’, if you know the student is involved in other sports, questions could include:

- “What other sports do you enjoy”?
- “We know you participate in other sports, what’s next for you on the sporting calendar”?

### **Questions and Further Information**

If you have any questions regarding this briefing or wish to discuss them further, plan interview questions or similar please contact Hana-Rae on [hana-rae@nzsportcollective.com](mailto:hana-rae@nzsportcollective.com)