

From Mediocre to Media-ready

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I've had opportunities to speak with the media about cross-country skiing and the National Development

Centre over the past few years. The main sources include newspapers, websites and radio shows. Sometimes they can catch you off guard at the end of a race and want that "in the moment" comment about the event, and other times it's a scheduled meeting. Either way, it can be scary to have your spoken words written and reported. I haven't had any media training but I thought I could piece together some simple guidelines and pointers that have worked for me. Hopefully this helps if you are one to get nervous for an interview.



Be polite: I find reporters to be great, enthusiastic people. It's very slim to come across one that wants dirt or gossip or to make you look bad in our sport. They want your time just as much as you want to have a solid interview. If you are polite and courteous from the beginning everything will run smoothly. They are also more likely to write a great story if they enjoyed speaking with you.

Relax: SMILE! I found the best way to keep things light is to smile. It makes everyone more comfortable and helps to keep the mood positive. Don't be afraid to take time with your responses since you usually only get one shot at it. If you remember to pause and think it will help you to have a relaxed conversation. I noticed that they often speak quickly as though they are in a rush, but don't let that stumble or intimidate you.



Speak the truth: By the truth I mostly mean keep it real. If you are attempting to come up with "The Best Answer Ever!" it will come across as fake. No matter how simple or straightforward something may be, if it is sincere it will come across that way. In the simplest terms, you are usually being quoted and what you say will be attached to your name, so make sure you are telling the truth.

Keep your emotions in check: There are certain times that you may be approached for an interview that aren't the most ideal. Right after a race, when you can barely breathe, is often

one of them. There are those times when emotions from a good or bad race are running high. Especially if it is a bad race it can be tempting to blow off that steam right then. Just remember to keep things under control and remember that they are just a reporter. If you really aren't in the mood, it is probably a safer move to decline the interview or comment rather than to run the risk of a poor quote. It's okay to share your emotions and feelings if you aren't going to hurt yourself or anyone else in the process.

Be concise: You only have a matter of minutes, even seconds, to say what you'd like to. So, although taking the time to think out what you'd like to say and have it come across the right way is important, stick to the point of the question. Too many adjectives and long-winded answers can lose the essence of the moment and you may come up short in actually answering the question.



Don't be afraid to ask questions: Where will the story be run and when? Who is this person reporting for exactly? Have they ever experienced cross-country before? Is it available online if it's a newspaper while out of town? Did they get your name right? I went through half of an interview once with someone calling me Anne. It's okay to correct them! Sometimes if someone is unfamiliar with the sport you have to do a bit more explaining.

Think of it like a conversation: Hopefully the interviewer is interested in what you are saying and is paying attention. Otherwise it can turn into a conversation with yourself. The time is usually divided into two repeated parts: question, answer, question, answer... but I pretend I'm having a conversation by looking at them and gesturing like you normally would with a friend.

Always remember you are having a conversation with the world: You are talking with one person but the purpose of the conversation is for many, many people to read it. You are, in a sense, a source of information for other people to read or hear. Therefore anything you say or mention is official business unless you specify otherwise.

Don't forget to say thank you: At the end of the day I look at every opportunity with any media source as an opportunity to promote our sport and my team. So don't forget to thank them for their time.

One last point is to have fun with it! Keep it light-hearted and enjoy being able to speak your mind to the public. Good luck!

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