

Template: Guidelines for Bloggers for the 2010 World Wheelchair Rugby Championships (WWRC)

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Thank you for your interest in blogging for the World Wheelchair Rugby Championships! Since different bloggers will have different levels of experience, we've assembled this package to help everyone get on the same page. While we require you to follow our Code of Ethics and Blogging Policy, the rest of the package is simply a series of resources to help you if you're stuck or if you're unsure if you're on the right track. We've got tips on good blogging, examples of successful blog posts, topic ideas and even a worksheet to help you brainstorm anecdotes for your post. If you require more assistance or if you have any feedback about this package, please email amcneney@2010wwrc.com.

We look forward to reading your posts soon!

Blogging Policy and Bloggers' Code of Ethics

(adapted from Cyberjournalist.net)

WWRC Blogging/Tweeting Guidelines for Persons Associated with the 2010 World Wheelchair Rugby Championships

These guidelines have been developed for persons associated (Associated Persons) with the 2010 World Wheelchair Rugby Championships (WWRC) who maintain either personal or corporate blogs, accessible by the general public, that contain content related to their personal experience at, and participation in, the WWRC.

1. What is a blog?

A blog is a website that takes the form of a journal or diary, usually displayed in reverse chronological order, and accessible by the general public.

2. Personal Information

Bloggers should be sensitive to their audience. In general, blogs take the form of a first-person (I or we) journal entry, but there is considerable flexibility in the format. It might, for example, be appropriate to use selections of interviews or to do a profile on an athlete.

Bloggers should not disclose any information that is confidential and private in relation to any third party including, without limitation, information that may compromise the security, staging and organization of the WWRC and, where relevant, the Associated Persons' respective team or the privacy of any other Associated Person.

3. Distribution of Photos or Moving Images

Associated Persons may freely use any photos or images they have created and that depict only themselves. Please obtain permission to use images of other people. If using photographs or videos created by other people, get permission and cite the source.

4. Advertising and Sponsorship

Any advertising and/or sponsorship must not be intrusive (i.e. no pop-ups nor expandable banners). Bloggers agree to respect all WWRC sponsors and advertisers.

5. **No Exclusivity**

Associated Persons should not enter into any exclusive agreement with any company with respect to the posting of any WWRC content.

6. **Liability**

When Associated Persons choose to go public with their opinions on a blog, they are responsible for their commentary. Bloggers can be held personally liable for any commentary deemed defamatory, obscene or proprietary. In essence, bloggers post their views at their own risk and they should make it clear that the views they express are their own. Bloggers should also abide by the Bloggers' Code of Ethics (see next page) to ensure that their posts are fair, accurate and balanced.

7. **Right to Alter Content**

We reserve the right to edit or reject content submitted to us for use on the 2010 WWRC blog. This may include sentence edits (grammatical mistakes or edits for clarity) or excerpting blog posts. When at all possible, we will work with the blogger during this editing process.

Bloggers' Code of Ethics

Be Honest and Fair

- Acknowledge your biases and allegiances. There is no such thing as an “objective writer” and mentioning factors that shape your perspective help the reader to trust you. For example, it’s not a conflict of interest to write a post about classification if you’re a classifier, but you want to state this stance up front so that the reader knows where your biases may lie.
- If any information is questionable, make clear that it’s in doubt.
- Acknowledge conflicts of interest. It’s okay, for example, to allow a sponsor to blog about their products as long as the post is clearly labeled as being by the sponsor.
- Follow the “Would I say this to someone’s face?” rule.

Minimize Harm

- Show compassion for those who may be adversely affected by what you blog. Use special sensitivity when dealing with inexperienced sources.

Be Accountable

- Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.
- Invite dialogue with the public over the post’s content and the blogger’s conduct.
- Disclose conflicts of interest, affiliations, activities and personal agendas.
- When advertisers are given special interest, disclose them fully to readers.
- Abide by the high standards to which you hold others.
- Understand that as an official blog, we have higher standards of libel/slander than a personal blog. To maintain the tone we are trying to achieve on the 2010 WWRC site, we will err on the side of caution.

Tips for Successful Blogging

- **Write in your own voice:** A good blog post sounds like the person who's writing it. Because it's more casual than, say, an academic essay, you don't have to follow strict conventions of grammar or paragraph rules. Don't use language that you wouldn't use in every-day life in an attempt to make your post sound formal. Readers connect to the "voice" of the blogger. As long as your blog is grammatically correct enough to make sense to a reader and is not too confusing, it's okay to let your spoken voice come through.
- **Show, Don't Tell:** The first rule of writing fiction is "show, don't tell" and this is also true for blogs. People remember anecdotes more than abstractions. Say, for example, you are writing about a selection camp. The phrase "The selection camp was great and everyone worked hard" doesn't really tell the reader much. Saying something like, "During our speed test, three guys pushed so hard they puked in a garbage can" gives the reader a clear (if gross) picture of how hard everyone was working. When in doubt, remove bland and abstract adjectives like 'fun,' 'great,' 'good,' or 'interesting' and simply show how something was fun, great, good or interesting.
- **Get to the Point:** You're probably passionate about whatever you're writing about and could go on forever about it. The best way to avoid rambling, however, is to have an "angle." You should be able to sum up in a few sentences what your blog post is about. (example: "I am writing about why the classification system needs to be reformed" or "I am writing about how our team is using mental training to give us a competitive advantage.") Having a focus will also make the blog post easier to write. Along these lines, be aware of why you're writing. Are you writing to share an interesting anecdote/ point of view or are you making an argument? Are readers expecting to be entertained, informed or both? Knowing what you want your reader to think/feel/do will help you shape your post.
- **Don't be afraid to use scenes:** When you think of a book or movie, you most likely remember a particular scene. Very few people remember an impressive voice-over or the description on the back of the DVD case. Sometimes, one scene (complete with dialogue and descriptions) can tell more than summarizing a year's worth of events. Scenes also allow the reader to feel as if he or she is right there with you, so don't neglect all of the senses. If, for example, you're writing about the lack of funding for wheelchair rugby in a developing nation, relating a scene where a group of athletes tried a proper rugby chair for the first time at a camp you ran will show the reader what a big difference more funding would make for these athletes.

- **Know Your Audience:** Your blog posting style will change depending on your target audience and the goal of your blog. The WWRC 2010 blog will be read by people all over the world, some of whom might have little knowledge of the sport. The use of obscure terminology or sophisticated discussions of tactics might alienate your readers.
- **Edit Your Post:** This may seem obvious, but since blogs are informal, it's easy to think that you can write down your thoughts and feelings on a topic and then send it out to the world. This may work for some bloggers, but 99% of posts are probably made better by taking a little time to re-read what you've written and see if you're saying exactly what you mean. It's sometimes helpful to have a friend look at your blog post to see if you're missing anything.
- **Don't Be Afraid to Take a Stance:** As long as you are making clear the difference between your opinion and objective fact and are treating people with an opposing opinion with respect, it's great to take a stance on an issue. This will help spark a discussion about your post.

Sample Blog Post

Note: This blog post is just an example. Your post doesn't have to be this long or follow exactly this structure.

Why Don't These People Just Stay At Home and Do Housework?: What I Learned from Teaching "Murderball"

I was on a bus traveling to Minnesota for a varsity wheelchair-basketball tournament when I read my students' reading responses to "Murderball." I was teaching a first-year composition course at the University of Illinois themed around sports and I had been looking forward to this unit all semester. Wheelchair sports are a passion of mine and I thought my students would love the hard-hitting, gritty documentary with its cool soundtrack and its uniquely candid take on people with disabilities as much as I did.

I had given them a fairly simple reading response: "What stereotypes does "Murderball" break? Does it reinforce any stereotypes?" I had even printed off a handout on common stereotypes of people with disabilities. If anything, I figured, my students would err on the side of political correctness, since pretty much all they knew about me was that I walk with a crutch and that I play wheelchair basketball.

The bus I was traveling in was packed full of wheelchair athletes and their endless stuff: spare wheels, water bottles, pumps, backpacks and tools. Bridie's artificial feet were strewn amongst pillows and backpacks and piles of wheels. B-Wag was painting the cracks on his hands with Nu-Skin. Someone else was changing a tire and you could smell the weird stagnant, rubbery smell of air that's spent a couple of months inside a tube. By the lift, Coach Frogley slept with his feet up on his wheelchair, which was rocking with the movement of the bus. This was the world of wheelchair sports that I knew and that informed my attitude on disabilities: something so natural to me that I didn't even think about it.

I picked up the first reading response, which began "When I watched this movie, I thought why don't these people just stay at home and do housework?" I was so surprised that I almost dropped my stack of papers. I read on. "These people have my pity, but not my respect. They have a long road ahead. The best of wishes to them!" I sat back, stunned: 1943 was calling and wanted its horrific stereotypes back. Had my students been taking awareness training from my grandmother? I read more responses. Though some of my students enjoyed the movie and were on the mark, many more depicted an attitude that shocked me: "Are we, as a society, really spending money to let these people do this?" "This movie taught me that people in wheelchairs deserve to be treated as human beings!" "Even though these people lead unhappy lives, wheelchair rugby allows them to feel a little bit normal."

These kids were supposed to be the cream-of-the-crop, college-educated future generation. What was going on here? Once my knee-jerk anger subsided, I decided to use my students' attitudes as a teaching moment. I took the worst sentences, changed the word "murderball" to "the NBA" and the word "disabled" to "tall" and created an essay arguing that the NBA was a great thing because it allowed tall people to feel normal and make friends with one another, though perhaps allowing tall people to play basketball is a bad idea because they are heavier and so have a higher instance of arthritis. My class and I had a discussion on why my NBA essay was ridiculous, but why this line of reasoning seems to make sense when applied to wheelchair sports. It was the best discussion I've ever had in a classroom and I learned a great deal from my students: that certain cultures have very different ways of looking at disability, that many of my students had never met a person in a wheelchair, that disability wasn't something that they'd ever had to think about.

Towards the end of the semester, Mark Zupan came to speak at the University of Illinois. I didn't go to the talk, but at the next class session I had three students stay after class, literally shaking with excitement, to tell me that they'd actually got to meet Mark Zupan in person. They'd actually gotten to talk to him and he signed one of the girl's T-shirts and he was so awesome!

When "Murderball" first came out, I thought: wow, it's great that wheelchair sports are finally getting the recognition they deserve. I thought it was great that the documentary was tackling some of the lingering myths about people with disabilities, especially the ones relating to sex. And while I've gotten enough, "it's so great to see a person like you out in public!" comments from random strangers at bars to know that people's attitudes towards disabilities can be problematic, I had assumed that we were past the days when an 18-year-old college student would be shocked to consider that a person in a wheelchair was a human being.

It turns out, however, that my view was overly complacent. Like any other form of prejudice, we haven't entered some golden era of tolerance in regards to prejudice against people with disabilities. The value of "Murderball," then, is not just that it tackles stereotypes. "Murderball" forces us to have conversations about things that we'd rather not talk about, or that we assume we don't have to talk about any more. It makes us consider our own views about disability and it makes us share these views with others. My students may not remember anything about how to write a research essay, or the proper way to handle a thesis statement, but I'm pretty sure they will remember "Murderball."

Blog Post Brainstorming Worksheet

This worksheet contains exercises and suggestions for potential blog topics to get you started.

Free Writes

Free-writes are a great way to generate ideas for blog posts. The goal of a free write is to get past your inner critics and brainstorm a large amount of material that you can then shape into your blog post. Set your watch/ cell-phone alarm for a set amount of time (5 minutes is usually good) and write for this length of time without taking your pen off the paper (or fingers off the keyboard). Don't cross anything out or edit your grammar, just keep writing, even if you have to write the word "and" for a few seconds. It doesn't matter if you stray from the original prompt. Just go wherever your mind takes you.

Free-Writing Prompts:

- Describe your most memorable moment in sport as if you were there. Pay attention to all the 5 senses. Why was this moment so memorable?
- What are some of your frustrations with wheelchair rugby? What about the sport do you think needs to change?
- Describe the first time you played wheelchair rugby/ saw wheelchair rugby. Pay attention to all the 5 senses.
- Since you first were introduced to the sport, what changes have taken place? Are these changes for better or worse?
- Describe some memorable off-the-court moments: funny mishaps, adventures in a foreign country, pranks, friendships, etc.
- Why do you play/coach/volunteer at wheelchair rugby?
- How has technology impacted your experience with wheelchair rugby?
- What are some things that people don't understand about wheelchair rugby?
- The 2010 World Wheelchair Rugby Championships will take place in Richmond. What is your experience with Vancouver/ BC?
- If you were writing your memoirs, what scenes would you have to include? Describe them.

Potential Blog Topics

If you're still having trouble coming with post ideas, here are some topics to consider. This is by no means a complete list, so feel free to write about topics outside of the ones listed here:

- Experiences at selection camps.
- Experiences at tournaments leading up to the World Championships
- Rivalries/bonds between teams

- Classification
- The use of technology in wheelchair rugby (how the game is evolving, how sports science is impacting the sport, the evolution of chairs).
- How the movie “Murderball” impacted wheelchair rugby. What did you think of the movie?
- The evolution of wheelchair rugby
- Women in wheelchair rugby
- Memorable off-court moments/ mishaps/ disasters
- Mentors and role models
- Travel stories/ adventures
- Preparing for a World Championship
- Balancing work and sport
- Mental training.
- Training stories: have you done anything extreme/creative to train effectively? How do you get motivation to train?
- Wheelchair rugby in developing countries
- Wheelchair rugby and national pride