

# Athletic News

*from*  
Princeton University

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Office of Athletic Communications  
Jadwin Gymnasium  
Princeton NJ 08542-0071

phone	609.258.5655
fax	609.258.2399
SportsLine	609.258.3545
e-mail	daverose@princeton.edu
web	goprincetontigers.com

## HANDLING THE SEASONAL OVERLAP

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March 14, 2004. Selection Sunday. The Princeton men's basketball team spends the day eagerly awaiting a get-together later that night where it will find out its NCAA tournament opponent.

Meanwhile, the Princeton men's basketball SID spends the day at a women's lacrosse game against Virginia, a rematch of the national championship game from the season before. The game is televised live by CSTV, who gets to the field at 8 a.m. Even though there's a 7 p.m. basketball press conference and you'll probably have to be on a plane less than 48 hours later, you can spend absolutely no time thinking about either of those things.

These are the facts. Basketball season no longer starts on Dec. 1. "Spring" sports now start in the dead of the Northern winter. NCAA tournament competition can extend seasons past typical boundaries, and those postseason appearances often result in the greatest expectations and strains on SID's.

Seasonal overlap stretches athletic departments in a variety of ways, but in no area is that challenge more tangible than in sports information. Expectation levels from coaches, administrators, media and fans won't change no matter how much work remains from the previous season or how many people work in your office.

No matter whether you have five full-time staff members or one, the challenges remain the same. But the answers to those challenges parallel what you already do on a day-to-day basis...

### PREPARE...

...or maybe even more important, prepare early.

You probably know every team's full schedule by the middle of September. You probably have a sense of what teams might be postseason candidates way back in the summer. Hopefully you have a sense of coaches' personalities as they relate to your job.

So make a plan that takes the overlap into play. Make a point to finish a winter or even spring media guide extremely early in the fall, well before the overlap comes into play. Consistently update information, game notes, bios, etc. so that the postseason rush becomes less of a rush. Impress upon coaches the need to get going on things as early as possible so that you can take advantage of any “down” times.

In general, make it a point to do as much as you can for the next season as early as you can, because you often won’t have much of a choice if it’s too late.

## **PRIORITIZE**

An NCAA tournament game is almost always more important than a regular-season game. A home game that requires your attendance is almost always more important than an away game. Events with media attendance and statistical responsibilities take precedence over those that don’t.

These are obvious things about our job all the time, but they become more important in the context of the seasonal overlap.

Pay the most attention to things that require the most attention, no matter what the season. Involve student workers and administrative assistants heavily in projects and responsibilities. Keep your supervisor posted and never hesitate to suggest ways that you can more easily accomplish your responsibilities.

Most importantly, never forget that your personal life should be one of your priorities. Whether it be exercise, lunch or simply getting away for a little while, it will make it easier for you to handle your work priorities.

## **BE VERSATILE**

No matter what sports you might enjoy most, glean the important aspects of every sport and team at your school. No matter what sports for which you may have “expert” knowledge, learn something about other teams.

Why? Because the seasonal overlap might require you to help while someone else is away. Because a sport that doesn’t usually get a lot of attention might make the NCAA tournament or do something that gets attention. Because you can help make someone else’s list of duties easier by handling some things lower on their priority list.

Being versatile can make the overlap almost seamless. If you or someone on your staff has the ability to handle the end of one year or the beginning of another, no one will ever know there was ever an issue.

## **BE HONEST**

You have work priorities, and you (or your boss) know best what they are and should be on any given day or any given week.

The coach of the sport that falls lower on the priority list might not know that, so it's incumbent upon you to communicate it.

If the overlap from soccer is holding you back from finishing the track media guide, make the track coach aware of that. If the track media guide is holding you back from helping out an administrator with a project, make him or her aware of that. They may not like those answers, but they will appreciate your honesty.

## **COMMUNICATE**

Sure, SID's specialize in external communication, and most of us do that exceedingly well. But it doesn't hurt to become an expert in internal communication as well.

Go see an early-season tennis match during the middle of basketball season, even for a few minutes. Head to a wrestling match for a while even though you're hosting a big late-season soccer game the next day. While you're there, talk to the coaches and make your presence known. Get cell phone numbers so, if you're somewhere else, you can get a quote for a story on the website or just a better understanding of what happened in a game.

Above all, remember two things. It's impossible to be in two places at once, and, most importantly, the games will go on no matter how well you did your job of handling the seasonal overlap.

Unless, of course, there's lightning....or snow...or both...