November 23

Production meeting

Rehearsal for show finale

Show

Load-out immediately following show

Postshow party

November 24

All staff and participants depart Nashville

Promotional clips delivered to TNN and international distributors

Meeting with Arena to finalize all accounting and contractual

Meeting with TNN to discuss postproduction and promotional

schedule for television show

November 29-December 5 Television show edited

December 6

Show delivered to TNN and international distributors

December 8

Show revisions made

December 9

Final show delivered to TNN

December 14

TNN show aired

Note: Invoicing, bill paying, and other activities required to close books and wrap up the event continued into February 2000—two months after the show aired

As you can see, there is quite a bit that goes into producing an event. While this time line is not meant to be intimidating, it does reinforce the old saying that "the devil is in the details." If you plan and execute, you will have a great event.

## Chapter ONE

# Creating an Event

uppose you gave an event and nobody came. Impossible, you say? Well, do you remember the McCall's LPGA Championships in Vermont? What about the Stakes Match? I'll bet you missed the Scottish Grasscourt Championships. How many people miss the Criterium Circuit of Cycling or skating's Legends Competition? And whatever happened to the Sunkist Invitational?

The list of events that have come and gone in endless. Some of this is by design. For example, when we put on Nancy Kerrigan and Friends in February of 1994, we knew that it was going to be a one-time event designed to give Nancy an opportunity to skate after she was senselessly attacked and almost crippled by a group associated with one of her competitors during the U.S. National Championwhips in Detroit. She had seven weeks to get ready for the Lillehammer Olympics, and we felt that it was important for her to get out on the ice in front of a crowd before the Games.

However, we did not know that the LPGA event we ran at Stratton Mountain, Vermont, was destined for a short life, nor did anyone plan for Too Hot to Skate, a summer skating show, to last only two years. In fact, we plan in bring Too Hot to Skate back next year!

Some events, such as the Sunkist Invitational track meet, are very successful but run their course. Some are just ill conceived.

Why do some events make it while others Hon 1? Why do some last 5 years and others 105 forma? In this book we will explore a myriad of masons using actual situations from events I

have been involved with. In many cases an event's success or failure can rest in the planning and preplanning stages that brought the event to life in the first place. In some cases the key to success might even be found in the type of event you are contemplating and whether there is a market for it to begin with.

## THE JUGGLING ACT

Creating and operating an event, regardless of whether it is grassroots or professional, is a juggling act. Of the many issues you have to deal with, most of them, particularly in the planning stages, happen simultaneously. While I think this will all become clear during the course of this book, in the big picture, running an event is not "painting by the numbers." You don't simply go from step A to step B to step C, and so on. You have to be a juggler. I hope that some of what you get out of this book enables you to learn to juggle a few more balls a bit faster and more proficiently.

By way of illustration, just because sponsorship sales are discussed in chapter 4 does not mean that it is the fourth major issue you should attack during the organization of your event. In fact, if by some chance you can sell the concept for your event to a corporate sponsor before you have really figured out all of the details, you will be that much ahead of the game.

As a practical matter, you will be soliciting sponsors at the same time as you will be talking to prospective venues, participants, television You have to be ready

for all things at all times,

so always be on your toes.

distributors, and other vendors. You will probably also have tickets on sale. As you will find out, there is nothing wrong with all of this happening at the same time. In fact, it's normal. However, it does make life interesting when, for example, you have questions from potential sponsors (or others) that relate to some area of the event that you haven't fully worked out yet. This is one place in which your ability to juggle will be challenged.

At some point in the evolution of your event, you are going to be "winging it"—addressing a question that doesn't yet have a firm answer. In some cases the fact that you don't know the answer might cost you a deal. In other cases this process can serve to help you focus by requiring you to solve an issue right on the spot. Regardless, you have to be ready for all things at all times, so always be on your toes . . . in other words, get ready to juggle!

To some degree, the juggling is what makes the event business exciting. In every case your judgment will be a pivotal factor in determining the results. You will have to make judg-

ments in many situations in which there is no right or wrong answer. You will have to gather as much information as possible in the time allowed, rely heavily on your colleagues, and go with your best and most

solid instincts. Only time will tell if your judgment turned out to be correct.

Your ability to make judgments should improve over time. This will be one of the keys to your success as an event manager. And, while there certainly is no substitute for experience, I hope this book gives you at least a bit of a head start when you next come up against any of these potentially awkward and challenging moments.

## **DEFINING YOUR EVENT**

The first step in creating an event is to define it. Most events are defined by a few of the very

basic things I have outlined below. You will have to decide which of these factors apply to the event you are planning.

Participants. Is this an amateur or professional event; is it of major or minor importance? On the professional side, there are major events such as the World Series or Super Bowl and minor events such as a satellite tennis tournament or a Florida circuit golf event. On the "amateur" level, there are major bowl games such as the Orange Bowl or Rose Bowl and what I would consider the next tier of events such as the U.S. National Figure Skating Championships. These are supported by several other tiers of events extending all the way down to your local Little League. These amateur events take place in communities all around the world on a daily and weekly basis and form the backbone of international sports.

 Geographic reach. Does your event have local, regional, national, or international impact? A 5K race may only affect the participants and their families; a state championship

> high school basketball game may only draw attention from people in the state where it is held. Our King of the Beach Invitational had regional significance from Las Vegas to Los Angeles and San Diego; the NCAA Swimming

and Diving Championships have national significance, while Wimbledon has international impact.

Depending on press and television coverage, the *reach* of an event may be somewhat different from its impact. For example, Nancy Kerrigan and Friends was essentially a local event, but because of the press and television, it became an international event. The King of the Beach television coverage gives it national reach. The AT&T Challenge tennis tournament in Atlanta is essentially a local event. However, its international television agreements and press coverage give it worldwide reach. Golf's U.S. Open has become international by every measure.

· Sanction. Is your event recognized by a governing body within the sport? At the professional level, an event without a sanction is generally considered a special event for which there are no mandated rules and regulations. Our Best of the Beach Invitational volleyball event for women was not sanctioned because no organization had jurisdiction. As a result, we could make our own rules as long as the players agreed. The AT&T Challenge is a sanctioned event by the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP); thus, it is governed by a very tight set of rules. The Scottish Grasscourt Championships was not sanctioned and thus was considered an exhibition, with the outcome having no bearing on rankings.

Generally, sanctioned events for the pros are more important and more recognized by the sporting public than are nonsanctioned events. If the event is for amateurs, the sanction is critical as it will dictate who is eligible to participate. Thus, if you wanted to create a summer basketball league for college players, you would need a sanction from the NCAA. We needed NCAA approval for the Janet Evans Invitational because collegiate swimmers par-

ticipated. Virtually any event that is geared toward nonprofessionals will need a sanction from that sport's governing body so that the players maintain their eligibility. Unlike with the pros, the sanction won't necessarily make your event more important; it will just make it "legal" as determined by the group with jurisdiction over the athletes and promoters.

So, one of the first things to do when planning an event is to determine where, in the overall spectrum, your event is going to fall. In so doing, a major, if not *the* major, issue that you have to tackle is what your motivation is for putting on this event in the first place. It might be as basic as earning a profit. But, it might also be much more complex.

## KNOWING YOUR MISSION

Understanding your motivation is key because that will, in some cases, give you a road map for the other questions you are going to face. When we created Nancy Kerrigan and



The focus of the annual 5K race shown here is to raise money for a local charity. The budget is low, and volunteers from the community do the bulk of the work.

Friends, for example, it had a specific purpose that was geared to a particular moment in time. It was an event created to give Nancy an opportunity to perform in public after the rehabilitation of her knee and before facing a live audience and worldwide media attention at the Olympics. Profit was not the issue. In fact, all of the proceeds (almost \$200,000) went to various charities in the Boston area. Longevity was not important. As I mentioned before, no one had any intention of this event happening again (although, in retrospect, we might have been smart to make this an annual event). So, our parameters were very specific.

With this narrow focus we knew that we could create an exhibition that had strong participant support, was geared to a local market, and needed a sanction solely to ensure the skaters' (including Nancy's) Olympic eligibility. The fact that this event actually transcended the Boston market was a function of the unique circumstances surrounding the event, the media frenzy that accompanied Nancy at the time, and the interest and support of people such as Rick Gentile at CBS Sports, Steve Seigel at Dunkin Donuts, and Chris Clouser at Northwest Airlines, each of whom got their company involved to provide a bigger platform, all of which was beneficial to Nancy.

Conversely, the King of the Beach Invitational volleyball event was created with the vision of it becoming the biggest event in the history of professional beach volleyball. Profit was the motive, international media attention was the goal, and breaking new ground for the sport and our company was the objective.

With our motives understood, we were able to define clearly our objective for the King of the Beach, which was

to put on a profitable elite professional event that had national and international implications and functioned under the highest official sanction available.

This became our mission statement.

As we did when creating the mission statement for the King of the Beach Invitational,

you should strive to define your event by describing all of your motives. If you can capture your event in one sentence (which may be difficult), you will be off to a good start.

A defining statement will help you create a road map for your event and will become an important management tool if you or your staff ever feel you are losing sight of your priorities. The contrasting goals (as defined in the mission statements) behind Nancy Kerrigan and Friends and the King of the Beach Invitational dictated very different paths for establishing and managing these events. The King of the Beach tournament had to be an official Association of Volleyball Professionals (AVP) Tour event for it to have credibility in the minds of the players and public. Therefore, our first step had to be to contact the sport's governing body—in this case, the Association of Volleyball Professionals-to seek their approval. We knew that without their sanction, this event would never get off the ground.

With the event for Nancy, time was short (we had about four weeks to organize the whole thing), so we first had to find out if the event was logistically feasible. Without a venue, an available date for the skaters, and a sponsor or two, this event could not have happened even if we had sanctions from every group from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to the United States Figure Skating Association (USFSA). In this case, our first calls were to arenas in the Boston area. Only after knowing that we had "a place to play" did we concern ourselves with sanctions and other regulatory issues.

On perhaps a more fundamental level, you might want to put on an event to raise money for your local Little League or create an event, such as a junior tennis tournament, that will serve as a stepping-stone for local and regional athletes to qualify for rankings in their sport on a national level. In the Little League case your mission statement might read something like this:

Create a fund-raising all-star game that showcases the talent of local kids, the proceeds of which will go toward enabling the team to participate in statewide summer leagues for the purpose of gaining additional playing and educational experiences.

From this one sentence everyone, from participants to sponsors to spectators to staff members, will know exactly what this event is all about.

## **Profitability**

On an even more basic level, your primary objective for being in the event management business may simply be to earn profits. For example:

We are currently trying to bring an LPGA Tour event to Boston. The motivation here is twofold: First, we see a void in the marketplace, as there is no women's professional golf in New England. Second, we see an opportunity to make a good profit on an event that can have longevity for our company.

The working mission statement for a Bostonbased LPGA event might read something like thin:

Create or acquire a ladies' professional golf tournament that will attract the top players in the world. The event must be profitable after two years. The location for the tournament must be uithin reasonable driving distance of downtown

Hoston to make it a "Boston event" with the goal of attracting major

corporate support for the tournament. The event must have television opportunities and be geared toward having a long-term life in the area.

While a bit longer than one sentence, this mission statement provides specific direction for what information is needed prior to making a decision to proceed with the event. In this case we would need to:

- See if there are any golf courses available within the geographic boundaries reguired.
- Find out if there are any available dates on the LPGA Tour.
- See if any television outlets would be interested in such an event.

As you can see from these very different examples, the motivation for promoting an event can vary as much as the sport and the participants. Thus, the first rule of event planning and management is to figure out why you are doing this event in the first place. This is why your mission statement becomes a must.

## Personality

The first rule of event

planning and management

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in the first place.

Your mission statement should also help you determine your event's personality, which admittedly is an intangible element that is difficult to define. While I am not looking to make it more complicated, the best characterization of an event's personality is found in the

Supreme Court's definition of pornography: You will know it when you see it. So much for simplifying things!

Your event will be judged from every conceivable angle by everyone who comes in contact with it. They will be asking: Did people know about it? Were the tickets too expensive? Was parking adequate?

Was the competition entertaining? How was the food? Were the rest rooms clean? Were the souvenirs worth buying? Did it start on time? Did it end in a reasonable period of time? The list goes on and on.

As difficult as it may be to create a personality for your event, it will nonetheless be a very important aspect of your job and, along with some of the other issues that we will cover, will be a measure of your success. It will also become a symbol for how you are personally defined in the marketplace. Therefore, if your mission statement can allude to the personality that you want your event to have, you will again establish a direction for your event that will make your job of managing the event that much easier. While this adds to the task of defining your event (and makes it all the more difficult to capture in one sentence), the time spent at the beginning of the event's creation will be well worth it later on. Invest the time up front and you will be able to answer a lot of the questions that are sure to surface later.

After you have established the motivation for the event, written your mission statement, and estimated whether you can pay for it (we will examine budgets in chapter 2), then, and only then, should you begin the process of creating or designing the

event. The first step in this process (and don't forget that many of these things will happen simultaneously) will be to determine if you are better off starting from scratch or taking over an existing property. Most of this book is written assuming you are starting from scratch. If you buy an existing event, many of these decisions and issues will have been predetermined or already dealt with.

## **ACQUISITION OR CREATION**

Many benefits can be gained from buying an existing event, including the event's history or goodwill, sponsors, cash flow, participant lists, ticket buyer lists, a spot on the calendar, and so forth. If you can achieve your objectives and afford the up-front financial obligation required by the seller, the chances are good that you will be best served by buying an event. However, in the majority of situations, either you will determine that you can't meet your objectives, that no events are available, or that those that are available are too expensive. So, being entrepreneurial, you will choose to create your own event.

## Acquisition

An Insider's Guide to Managing Sporting Events

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Someone recently asked my opinion on whether he should buy an existing dance event or create one himself. The question was prompted by the fact that, while the existing event was for sale, this potential buyer thought he could save quite a bit of money by putting the acquisition cost into establish-

> ing a new event that was bigger and better. In some cases that might be true. In this particular case, however, the event in question was in its 17th year of operation, had positive cash flow, and was a U.S. Championship in a specific genre of dance. I explained to the poten-

tial buyer that no matter how quickly he could build a new event, the chances were slim that he could re-create the history and tradition of the existing event, and he would be hard pressed to achieve the significance conveyed by a sanctioned event with "U.S. Open" in its title. If the numbers made sense, I told him, he should buy the event. He did.

The decision of whether to acquire or create a sporting event isn't always so black and white, however. A set of criteria can help you make this decision. I suggest you begin by going back to your mission statement.

We have been on the selling side of the event business a couple of times but have purchased only one event, the AVP Championships of New England, which we bought from the AVP and eventually sold back to them. When we bought the event, we did so because it assured us of a prime summer date on the calendar, which was critical in the short New England summer window. When I sold ProServ's Washington, D.C., women's indoor tennis event, it was because Ion Tiriac (at the time Boris Becker's manager) was willing to pay a considerable multiple to purchase our date to bring an event to Germany. The date on the calendar and the sanction from the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) were the driving factors.

Determining a fair price for the sale or purthase of an event is often the sticking point. As with the sale of any business or business unit, there are many ways to put a value on an event: the most common are based on multiples of earnings, cash flow, or gross revenue. All of these are acceptable, but none necessarily carries the day. Your particular situation may suggest that these models don't matter.

In the case of the D.C. women's event, Tiriac had a major sponsor, German television, and a venue that were all willing to do virtually whatever it took to bring women's tennis to Germany to take advantage of the boom beunn by Becker and Steffi Graf. Thus, Tiriac was willing to pay us more than the 10 times earnings multiple that probably would have been reasonable at that time. In the earlier dance example, because this

particular buyer was equally prepared to start his own event if he couldn't negotiate a lavorable price for the existing one, he was unwilling to pay 15 to 20 times earnings, which probably would have been reasonable in the marketplace at the time of that transaction.

The point here is that to evaluate whether in buy an existing event, you need to study the event's financial results (say, from the three prior years) and determine what, if any

relevance they have to your situation (our results in Washington, D.C., had virtually no bearing on what Tiriac would do in Germany because it was a completely different market). You should then try to understand the going rate (i.e., multiple of earnings) for sports and entertainment properties in the broader marketplace. Then, knowing your own financial wherewithal, make a decision on how to pro-

You also have to consider the following nonfinancial issues:

- Date availability
- Sanction
- Player interest
- Site
- Sponsorship
- Television

These nonfinancial elements (such as the ability to hold a U.S Open titled event in the dance example) will often be the key factors in your decision-making process.

In any case, the decision to purchase or create an event is critical and potentially costly, so be sure to bring financial experts into this analysis.

#### Creation

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or create an event is critical

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experts into this analysis.

Many of the issues that surface during an acquisition decision should be factored into

your thought process when determining whether to create an event. Again, financial and marketplace conditions are the key.

From a financial standpoint, creating an event will not require the same upfront purchase price that acquiring a property carries with it. However, you will po-

tentially have some pretty heavy cash needs, nevertheless. Thus, you need to be prepared to spend some significant dollars before seeing any revenue flowing your way.

While we will cover some of the issues of creating an event later in the book, here we will address various start-up expenditures. Perhaps the biggest one is an item that may not take any money directly out of your pocket but could be the most expensive cost of all-opportunity cost.

An Insider's Guide to Managing Sporting Events

The first issue

you need to deal with

when thinking through

the creation process is,

do you have the resources

to devote

to this project

without it generating

any income for you?

Starting an event takes a major commitment of time and energy. This is time and energy that you could spend doing something else that might deliver immediate financial gain for you. Therefore, the first issue you need to deal with when thinking through the creation process is, do you have the resources to devote to this project without it generating any in-

come for you? If you can't afford the time at the front end of the event, then you should not go this route. Unless you have a sponsor or other financial backer lined up (or simply have the money yourself), the reality is that you could go weeks or months without seeing any money coming in while spending heavily at the same time.

In this regard, one of the key financial issues is whether you have the seed capital to start an event. As with the purchase price in an acqui-

sition, starting an event takes up-front capital for things such as the following:

- · Applications. Many sporting organizations will require that you make a nonrefundable deposit along with your application to start an event. For example, we recently wanted to apply for a sanction on the ATP Tennis Tour. The application requires a \$10,000 deposit. Most grassroots events won't have that big of an up-front price tag, but you have to be prepared for this.
- Venue deposits. Just as with a governing body, many venues will require that you give

them a down payment on the use of their facility. We had to give a golf course \$1,500 and the hotel \$1,000 eight months in advance of an upcoming pro-celebrity golf tournament we were planning. These are not big fees, but as you will see, these costs add up.

· Marketing costs. Because you will have to market your event, you will need to create logos, brochures, videos, and so on. Again, we will discuss all of this in detail later, but these too can add significantly to your startup costs.

In addition to the financial issues, the creation of an event requires a thorough study

> of the marketplace conditions. You should go through the exercise of studying the market whether you create or acquire an event. However, when acquiring an event, there will be a history that will tell you what you can expect. If the results have been lousy, don't buy the event unless you plan to move it!

> However, with a new event you are taking a risk that the public will accept your project and support it through sponsorship, ticket purchases, merchandise

purchases, and so forth. This is a risk, and, as with any event, that is really the bottom line.

Whether you create or acquire an event, this is a risky business. Essentially, as an event organizer you are an entrepreneur with all of the risks, rewards, pressures, and potential victories that go along with that line of work. As long as you recognize this and have the financial stability to absorb the up-front costs and potential losses (don't ever expect to make money in your first year!), then you can be successful . . . but be sure you have analyzed the financial implications carefully before proceeding any further.

### THE SANCTION

After going through the "create versus acquire" analysis, and assuming that you decide to start your event from scratch (and again, this book is written from the perspective of creating an event), you will have to determine If it needs, or will be enhanced by having, a sanction.

What exactly is a sanction anyway; why is it so important, and how do you know if you need one?

## **Defining the Sanction**

A sanction is an official approval for your event. Sanctions are granted by the regulafory body that oversees your sport.

Virtually every sport has a governing body or player's association that organizes the sport on either a professional or amateur baais, or both. These governing bodies grant the all Important sanctions. On the Olympic side of things, the sanctioning bodies usually feed into the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which governs the Olympic Games and all of their qualifying events. On the professional side, there are many different sanctioning bodies.

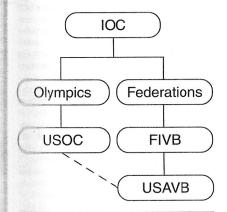


Figure 1.1 Diagram of Olympic sanctioning taidles

The IOC, which is located in Lausanne, Switzerland, is made up of individual federations that govern each sport on a worldwide basis. Their governance runs to issues as varied as equipment specifications; athlete eligibility; international competition; scheduling; Olympic qualifying rules; rules and regulations of the sport; and the issuing of sanctions to organizers of world, international, and national competitions.

The Federation Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB), for example, is the IOC member that rules indoor and beach volleyball around the world. They govern the competitions that lead to Olympic qualification and determine what countries will hold international competitions, such as the World Championships, World Cup, and so on. Among other things, they also grant sanctions or approvals to organizers that want to put on special events.

Each federation is composed of national governing bodies (NGBs) that organize a sport in a particular country. In the United States, the NGB that governs volleyball is USA Volleyball (USAVB), which is a member of the FIVB. Each NGB (USAVB, for example) is also a member of its national federation. In the United States the national federation is the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC), which represents the United States within the IOC. With multiple masters, this can all get very confusing, so let me try to clarify.

## Importance of the Sanction

Back in 1986 we wanted to put on a series of men's indoor volleyball events that featured the United States against Brazil. To put on this series, we had to go to USAVB (the NGB) with the idea. They had to give it their blessing (or sanction) and then, on our behalf, go to the FIVB (the international federation) to get their approval. The sanctioning process allows the governing body (or bodies) to control the game around the world so that it is played under authorized rules with approved equipment. It also enables the federation to control the growth and flow of events, which is important to them for a variety of reasons. Without going through the **B**e sure you thoroughly

understand the parameters

of the sanction agreement

before you enter into it.

sanctioning process, we could not have put on an event using official teams from the United States and Brazil.

By means of comparison, the situation in beach volleyball has been somewhat different. Again, this sport, which is a cousin to the indoor game and only adopted as an Olympic sport at the Atlanta Games in 1996, is governed internationally by the FIVB. However, in the United States the national governing bodies (USOC and USAVB) did not pay much attention to beach volleyball, so it was instead organized and developed by a group of players through an organization called the Association of Volleyball Professionals (AVP), which the players owned and controlled. The

existence of the AVP, of which I was the chief executive officer for two years, made the creation and development of new beach volleyball events in the United States even more complicated.

During beach volleyball's developmental years, the AVP and FIVB

were unable to see eye to eye on how the game should be organized. The AVP did not recognize the authority of the FIVB, and vice versa. As a result, if you wanted to start a beach volleyball event in the United States, as we did in 1991 with the King of the Beach Invitational, we had to make a decision on which body to go to for a sanction. At the time, since beach volleyball was not an Olympic sport, we went to the AVP for the sanction.

We entered into a long-term agreement in which the AVP guaranteed that the top players (virtually all Americans at that time) would participate in the King of the Beach event as long as we paid the organization a iee (10 percent of the total prize money) and agreed to operate the tournament according to the rules and regulations of the AVP Tour. The parameters set by the AVP's rules and regulations were potentially onerous.

For example, the AVP wanted to restrict the sponsors with whom we could do business

based on product categories in which they had existing sponsorship deals. In the first couple of years of the event, we saw this as a serious problem since they had sponsors in some of the key areas, such as beer, sunglasses, balls, and cars. We were able to make a deal with the AVP that gave us a pro rata portion of the tour revenue from those sponsors in trade for our granting those companies the sponsorship rights to the King of the Beach event. Without that deal, the event would not have been affordable. Had we not understood the extent to which the AVP sanction reached, we could have ended up in a situation that was so restrictive that the financial viability of the event would have been

threatened. If we had learned this *after* signing an agreement with the AVP, we would have had a real problem.

So, be sure you thoroughly understand the parameters of the sanction agreement *before* you enter into it, keeping in mind that in the King of the Beach ex-

ample, without the sanction from the AVP, their members could not have played in our event, thus depriving us from having the best players in the world. Without these players, this new event, which we created from notes written on the back of a napkin during a meeting with Karch Kiraly (who came up with the idea in the first place), could not have come to life.

The need for the sanction for the King of the Beach Invitational applies to events in other sports and at every level. Let's say, for example, that the junior champion at your tennis club is an up-and-coming female tennis player to whom you would like to give the opportunity to play more competitive matches. You find out that in your geographic region there are only two events all summer long for junior tennis players. You decide that you want to put on an event that will give her practice in competitive situations and at the same time earn points toward her junior

ranking with the U.S. Tennis Association (USTA).

To put on this event, you would have to apply to the governing body, the USTA, for a sanction that would make your junior tennis event a recognized tournament on the USTA schedule. In so doing, you would apply for a date on their calendar, which, if accepted, would come with stipulations regarding the size of the draw, the type of balls that you play with, the surface that you play on, the role of coaches, scoring formats, dress, sponsors, and so forth. Without this sanction the tournament could still be held, but your club champ would not gain any points toward her national ranking and could lose her eligibility.

At the junior level the restrictions put on you by the USTA are not particularly onerous and are intended to be helpful. In fact, I suspect that at every level the sanctioning rules are perceived by the governing body to be helpful. You might view them differently in some cases. Therefore, you will always have to grapple with this sanction decision.

## **Need for the Sanction**

The need for a sanction can vary from sport to sport. In figure skating, for example, there are a variety of events and shows. Skating muctions are primarily generated by the need for individual Olympic eligible skaters to recelve permission to appear. Pros aren't regulated by any governing body and so can take part in any competition or show that they want. Likewise, a tennis player, as long as he or she is not in violation of any ATP or WTA rule, does not need a sanction to play in a nontour event or exhibition. As the event orunizer, you should take the responsibility for obtaining a sanction or confirming that one is not necessary, but all of this will be trigmered by the athlete's need for permission to participate. If the athletes don't need permission from some governing body, you may not Fare about gaining their sanction.

Using the 1998 version of our annual Halloween on Ice figure skating event as an exsimple, because we had up-and-coming junior Jennifer Kirk in the show, we needed a sanction from the U.S. Figure Skating Association (USFSA). If Jennifer had appeared in the show without it being sanctioned, she could have lost her Olympic eligibility at the tender age of 13. Conversely, at our Skating Goes Country Christmas special produced for TNN, with the exception of the local figure skating club that provided the sanction, all of the skaters were professional, so there was no need to get a sanction from the USFSA. Again, the bottom line is that you need to know the rules and regulations for the particular sport and understand what role the governing body plays.

This becomes especially important in team sports events. If you wanted to put on a special event related to professional baseball, you would have to go through the Major League Baseball Players Association (MLBPA). During one of baseball's work stoppages we wanted to put on a special skills challenge involving some of the top baseball players. The MLBPA advised us that this would be in contradiction to the players' collective bargaining agreement and, further, in the opinion of the MLBPA, was contrary to the best interests of the sport. So there was no event!

If you want to put on a basketball exhibition using NBA players, you have to go to the NBA and the National Basketball Players Association (NBPA). As indicated earlier, when we wanted to put on a new beach volleyball event, we had to go through the AVP.

When we started the King of the Beach Invitational, the AVP controlled all the events in which their members participated. In 1990 we went to them and proposed what was then the biggest prize money event in the history of the sport-\$200,000 for 14 players in a new and unique round-robin format to determine the best individual player. Jeff Dankworth, who was then running the AVP, had the foresight to understand that this was a great opportunity for his constituency, even though it meant giving up a modicum of control over the event itself. Over a period of time, we were able to strike the deal I referred to earlier. which enabled this new event to be brought to life. The King of the Beach event has since

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grown into one of the most prestigious titles in the sport and the showcase event for beach volleyball in the United States.

Could we have done the King of the Beach event without a sanction? Yes, but it would not have enabled us to meet our objectives as set out in our mission statement (i.e., put on an event with the best players in the world) because the top players would not have been allowed to play. Thus, as a practical matter, we could not have operated the King of the Beach Invitational without the AVP sanction.

This doesn't mean, however, that there aren't dozens of events that can't be done without going through this process. Virtually every professional figure skating event is done without a sanction. Ray Benton, who helped me so much early in my career, began the senior tennis tour

without a sanction from anyone. At the local level, the 5K Racquet Run had no sanction, and none of our KidSports Foundation events were sanctioned by any governing body.

Remember, the mission statement for your event should help you make a decision as to whether you need a sanction.

## **Applying for the Sanction**

If you decide that you need a sanction, the process for applying for a sanction for a new event is not particularly complicated (it depends on the sport), although it is not necessarily a rubber stamp either.

To apply for a sanction for a new event, begin by calling or writing the appropriate sanctioning body (see the list in appendix D) and tell them you want to start a new event that has their sanction. They will no doubt ask you a variety of questions and lead you through the process. Among other things, you will have to prove that you have the resources to follow through with your event, both financial and otherwise. This is not usually a complex process, but most organizations will be

thorough, particularly if large sums of money are involved.

If you are interested in applying to become the organizer of an existing major event on the national or world calendar (such as the U.S. Track and Field Championships or the World Gymnastics Championships), the process is much more lengthy and in many cases will include having to create a local organizing committee (LOC); having significant venues lined up; and in many instances, providing a financial guarantee. In this case you will

Before making any decision

be competing against other promoters and organizing committees from around the country or the world.

Unlike the application process for a newly created event, such as the King of the Beach Invitational or the junior tennis tournament discussed earlier, the

sanctioning process for national and international events can take years. At one end of the spectrum is the Olympic Games themselves. These are awarded six years in advance and usually only after a process that takes several years (a process that has recently been the subject of a great deal of controversy for financial impropriety). A world championship or national championship will require a similar process. Therefore, if you decide that you want to promote an event of this magnitude, you must be organized well in advance and be able to prove that you can deliver everything from volunteers to hotel rooms to transportation to athlete lodging to sanction fees to prize money to sponsorship and local government support. Only those with significant experience and resources should undertake projects of this magnitude.

Regardless of the size and scope of your event, before making any decision on the sanction, contact the appropriate governing body and research your sport because each one is different. If you determine that you need or want a sanction, once you receive it from the proper federation, you will be on

your way to establishing your event. This is when you can start the creative process of designing your property.

### **DESIGNING YOUR EVENT**

Designing the event is where you have an opportunity to be creative and ultimately determines what will define the event. As discussed earlier, every event should have its own personality that will give it a place in the minds of the participants, spectators, sponsors, and others who will be instrumental to its success. In my opinion, one of the key elements to the personality of an event is its friendliness to the participants. I came to this conclusion early in my career.

When I worked on the Colgate Grand Prix men's professional tennis tour, certain events

were known as "playerfriendly" events, while others seemed to view the players as interchangeable pawns in the tournament committee's overall plan to make profits, entertain guests, creale a platform for themselves, and so forth.

There were successful tournaments on both ends of the spectrum. However, as you might imagine, the atmosphere at the player-friendly events was far more conducive to a positive experience than was the atmosphere at the tournaments that were not geared toward the players. Not surprisingly, the player-friendly events always seemed to have the stronger player fields, making for higher profits and greater spectator satisfaction.

Perhaps the most successful event in this respect was Jim Westhall's Volvo International in North Conway, New Hampshire. With its beautiful setting, player softball game, lobster least, and helicopter transportation from the hotel to the site, the players made a point of putting this event on their calendars. One year, the final was rained out. Illustrative of the special feeling about this tournament, the players agreed to come back several weeks

later to finish the match, indicating unprecedented cooperation. (Unfortunately, the event's management determined that the tournament outgrew the site and moved it to New Haven, Connecticut, where it eventually went out of business. There is a lesson to be learned from that evolution—or extinction—as well!)

Interestingly, Wimbledon, perhaps the most successful and certainly the oldest tennis tournament in the world, was during the mid-1980s the least player friendly of all. Steeped in tradition (and ignoring certain aspects of the 1973 player boycott), the All England Club management believed that the players would come no matter how they were treated because of the prestige associated with winning the Wimbledon title. After a while, the people in charge of the event started to see that certain players were not coming to the event and

others were complaining and suggesting that perhaps tennis on grass had outlived its role in the game. Some players came right out and said that they could do without Wimbledon.

To their credit, the response from the Wimble

don Tournament Committee to this undercurrent of discontent among the players was relatively quick and dramatic. In a very short period of time, Wimbledon became among the friendliest to the players with its player lounges, restaurant, transportation desk, day care center for the players' children, and other amenities. (Unfortunately for the All England Club, before the 2000 championships, some of the old player issues began to surface again.) The point is that even the biggest and best events are judged by the participants, who ultimately are the people whom the spectators, sponsors, and television executives are most concerned about. Care of the athletes should always be at the top of the list for the organizer.

After you have determined your motives for putting on your event, making sure your event is geared toward the participants is a must.

We will get into more of this later, including some tips for making athletes comfortable at your event.

## ✓ Checklist for Creating an Event

Since you no doubt want to be known for being creative, well organized, player friendly, sponsor sensitive, and concerned about your customers, you had better make sure that you have covered the fundamentals thoroughly. Thus, during the initial stages of your event's creation, make sure you do the following:

- ✓ Understand why you want to do your event in the first place.
- ✔ Define your event with a short mission statement.
- Study the rules and regulations as they apply to the type of participants who will come to your event.
- ✓ Know the breadth of authority of the sport's governing body or bodies.
- ✔ Determine if you need a sanction for your event.

- Decide if you want to buy an existing event or start one from the ground floor.
- Put your event's organization (i.e., staff, finances, etc.) in the shape necessary to apply for a sanction.
- Start the application process.
- ✓ Think about how to gear your event to the participants.
- ✓ Think about the personality that you want your event to take on.
- Most important, develop a budget that enables you to analyze the event's probability for financial success. You can have a great concept, perfect date and location, and player support for your event, but if every calculation shows that the expenses will far outstrip the revenues, you should seriously think through the viability of your project.

Chapter 2 will give you the tools to develop an expense budget that allows for this most important analysis.

## Working Model: Regional Tennis Tournament

To provide a framework to enable you to more easily understand the major points discussed throughout the book, I have created a working model—a hypothetical event that will illustrate in a practical manner the various elements involved in creating and operating an event.

The event I have created as the working model is an 18-and-under regional tennis tournament for boys and girls. The event will take place in your hometown. To get this event up and running, we would start with the following mission statement:

To create a sanctioned tennis event that will enable accomplished juniors (i.e., those with a state ranking) to participate in advanced-level competitive play on a regional level. The event will conform to USTA standards and be open to junior boys and girls from the surrounding four-state area. Any proceeds from the event, which must be fully funded by sponsors, television, or the site, will go to support junior tennis in the region through a grant process to be determined.

With the mission statement for this event in place, our next steps would be:

- 1. Determine the best location for the event.
- 2. Call the USTA to get an application to start the sanction process.
- 3. Having decided that the local tennis club is the best facility, talk to the club manager to determine dates for the event.
- Get the USTA regional office involved to see if they can help support our efforts.
- 5. Find out the dates of any other junior tennis tournaments in the region to be sure that our event will not conflict with theirs.
- 6. Begin talking to the kids and their parents in the region to let them know what we are planning to be sure that there is support for the project.
- 7. Develop a preliminary budget.
- 8. Develop a preliminary time line so that we have some feel for what needs to be done and when.

