

# Sports knowledge is vital

## ■ ASAP

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produced by ASAP are especially handy.

Peter Paul Balestrieri, founder and president of ASAP Sports, said he deploys his best five staffers, who are trained as traditional court reporters, for sports assignments because sports news conferences are the most demanding type of work.

Not only do sports interview transcribers have to take accurate word-for-word notes, they have to prepare the document within moments after the interview. Plus, they need to know about the particular sport they're covering.

Sports knowledge is vital. It can prevent some embarrassing moments, said Jeri Gargano, the firm's marketing director.

She recalled a transcriber-in-

training at a New York Knicks basketball game, who mistakenly wrote, "He's our poster guy," when the player's actual quotation was, "He's our post-up guy."

"You can sound like an idiot if you don't know the sport," Gargano said.

Balestrieri started the company in 1990 after the public relations director of the former Virginia Slims tennis tournament in New York City hired Balestrieri to quickly chronicle post-match comments from the players. Trained as a court reporter, Balestrieri still works sports events along with running the business.

The Ericsson Open, formerly known as the Lipton Championships, has used ASAP for the past five years. The popular March tennis tournament paid \$25,000 to ASAP for the 11-day South Florida event, said Wendy Elkin, the tournament's senior vice president of mar-

keting.

Elkin said regular court reporters from a different agency, who were hired during years before ASAP, needed an hour or two to produce a transcription. That was not fast enough for reporters, who have to meet deadlines, Elkin said.

"We try to make it easy for the press to do their job," Elkin said.

ASAP Sports has offices in New York City and Seattle, and Balestrieri is considering opening an office in Europe.

"When all is said, we're done" is the company's motto. The company also supplies court reporters for conventional legal cases.

"Some of them like to get away from the court deposition work. It breaks up the monotony of being a court reporter," said Balestrieri. "We're hitting those keys at tremendous speeds."

The sports half of the business is growing wildly, Gargano said. Golf and tennis tournaments are the biggest customers, but Major League Baseball and National Basketball Association assignments during the past few years have helped the sports operations grow in billable sales by 30 percent to 40 percent annually, Gargano said. She and Balestrieri would not specify annual sales.

The National Hockey League uses ASAP for the Stanley Cup playoffs because speed and accuracy are critical for reporters with strict deadlines after games, NHL spokesman Frank Brown said.

"Wherever there's a mega-event, speed is an issue," said Brown, a former 28-year hockey reporter. "This is as close to instantaneous as you can be. In this era of media, it's an essential service."

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