25 Social Media Tips for Student-Athletes:
Staying Out of Trouble, Avoiding Drama and Being Interesting
(adapted from Tom Satkowiak’s “50 Twitter Tips for DI Student-Athletes”)

1. When people decide to follow you on twitter, it’s because they believe you can add value to their timeline. Don’t craft useless tweets—you know the kind… they’re the ones you skip over every day while looking for something worthwhile.

2. Keep in mind that you are representing your team, the athletics department and the university when you tweet. Think before you tweet anything you wouldn’t say in a media interview. If you wouldn’t want your mom, boss or coach reading it, don’t tweet it.

3. After composing a tweet, but before you hit send, ask yourself: “Would I be comfortable saying this in front of my parents, my grandmother or my coach?” If the answer is no, discard it.

4. Before you hit send, take two more seconds to ask yourself, “Is this going to give my SID/athletic director/compliance director an ulcer?”

5. The athletics department is monitoring your Twitter and Facebook accounts. And the NCAA has acknowledged that it monitors student-athlete activity on Twitter as well. Even in Division II, don’t be fooled into believing nobody is paying attention.

6. Turn off the “enable location data” option on your Twitter app. Do you really want everyone knowing where you are at all times?

7. Along those same lines, remember that social media can be a tattle-tale. For instance, you told your coach you missed a team meeting because you had a doctor’s appointment. But if you tweet a picture of your frozen yogurt or you check in at the movies during that time, you’re busted.

8. It’s perfectly fine to display your sense of humor on Twitter. Fans in particular love it when student-athletes show their personality. But don’t tweet at the expense of others and when you tweet something clever or funny, try to leave around 15-20 characters free. This makes it easy for followers to retweet you without having to edit your original tweet.

9. Don’t allow the impersonal nature of Twitter lull you into a false sense of security. It’s easy for a thought that materializes in your head while you’re sitting on the couch to suddenly find its way into a tweet. But once you hit send, it’s there for the world to see.

10. Same goes for Facebook updates, events and photos. Privacy settings on Facebook might seem foolproof, but what’s to stop someone from taking a screenshot of your “Spring Break in Cancun” album and sharing it with the world? Or someone from showing up at your party just to get a photo of you drinking during your dry season? Same goes for tweets from your protected twitter account.

11. Speaking of photos, don’t allow yourself to be photographed while holding a drink. If you’re posing for a photo, put your drink behind your back or on a counter out of the frame. Even if you’re only drinking water. There are plenty of people out there who want to get student-athletes into trouble and posting photos on social media while holding a red cup are a good way to help them out.

12. Don’t tweet about how much you hate school or practice. You chose to become a college student-athlete. Many people would love to be an intercollegiate athlete and don’t want to hear about how much you hate having this great opportunity.
13. Don't tweet after a tough loss unless you're thanking fans for their support. Losses are emotionally draining and if you say something reactionary about your team or opponents you'll regret it in the morning. Sleep on it. Your followers will still be there tomorrow.

14. Enjoying a big win? Take 30 seconds to tweet a "Thank You" to the fans who were there to cheer you to victory.

15. Don't allow a hater with 20 followers to bait you into a "Twitter beef." Ignore them. Engaging in a public Twitter argument is a battle you won't win.

16. It's the morning of a big game/match, you feel like you have the flu and it looks like you won't be playing tonight. Don't announce that on Twitter. The opposing team’s players and coaches may be keeping an eye out for that kind of information.

17. Consider polarizing topics off limits on Twitter. Avoid commenting on sexual orientation, race, political views and religions you don’t understand.

18. There are many other teams and student-athletes at your school. Take the time to give them a shout-out on Twitter when they do big things. Ultimately, you’re all on the same team.

19. People want their experience on Twitter to be fun. Make a real effort to tweet far more positive content than negative.

20. What happens in the locker room stays there. Things that are said in private team settings should never find their way onto Twitter.

21. Same goes for information that has yet to be released by the athletics department like coaches being hired or fired or the signing of new student-athletes. If you’re not sure whether it’s been released, check the athletics website (eastbaypioneers.com), facebook account (facebook.com/csuebathletics) or twitter (twitter.com/csuebathletics) or check in with the sports information directors.

22. One of your Twitter followers may be in a position to hire you someday. Evaluate your tweets from time to time and ask yourself, “Would I want to hire this person?”

23. It’s ok to tweet once about what a great dinner you had at Red Lobster. But multiple mentions of the same business could be considered an endorsement, which is impermissible according to NCAA legislation.

24. Don’t tweet daily about how hard you’re working on the field/court/diamond/weight room/etc. If you were really working that hard, you wouldn’t be on Twitter to tell us all about it.

25. Don’t let these guidelines prevent you from enjoying your social media experience. It’s perfectly acceptable to show your personality and have fun in social media — it’s encouraged. But like anything else, the key is to enjoy it responsibly.

Have questions about using social media? Or about the Pioneer athletics website? Contact Kelly at kelly.hayes@csueastbay.edu or (510) 885-2821

Sources:
“Practice Safe Internet” by Rachael G. King, available at http://www.rachaelgking.com/2011/08/in-which-i-share-my-e-stalking-techniques/