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Mary R. Power
Bond University, Mary_Power@bond.edu.au

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CHAPTER 3: SPEECHES OF ACCEPTANCE AND INTRODUCTION

The acceptance speech: Accepting the Winner's Trophy

Among the less formal speeches we make in Australia are those made at awards nights. These can occur at work or as a result of our leisure activities. Auty (1997) argued that Australians, without doing it well, speak in public often. He suggested that more people needed courses in public speaking.

The sports announcers are exploding with delight. Australia has won a gold medal and the eyes of the world are on Cindy Track. Breathless and excited she breaks the tape and has a microphone thrust at her.

Millions of people are watching. She's very sincere. Her speech to the world is "I'm rapt! I'd just like to thank Mum and Dad and Grandma and my boyfriend Jeff, who believed in me. I'd like to thank my coach. He's been tremendous, great!"

Cindy Track is fairly articulate and she has made Mum and Dad's, not to mention Grandma's, day. She gives a similar speech at the Sports Dinner and everyone claps.

Can Cindy Track do better?
What advice would you give her?

Gerry Collins is a sports journalist for the ABC. He's conducted courses at the Australian Institute of Sport to help athletes deal with the media. He told me what most people who watch sporting events know – that American athletes are easy to interview because they are articulate, eager to talk and have something interesting to say. None of them start off "I'd just like to thank Mum and Dad and my sponsors and last, but not least, my boyfriend, who's back home."

Gerry's advice after years of sports awards dinners is:

- Have an opening prepared. Say something!
- Don't have a set written speech.
- Rather, speak around headings you have planned ahead of time.
- Keep the audience's interest.
- In your own interests, mention your sponsor.

Gerry admits that it is sometimes difficult to think straight when you have just run a marathon or swum in the butterfly, but he thinks that if athletes prepare for the poolside or trackside interview they can deal with interviews and make minispeeches just as well as they can run or swim. Gerry feels that it's just the same as training for sport. In your chosen sport or debating or scientific activity you have to get advice and take coaching and practise in areas of weakness. People who win awards are accustomed to tackling their weaknesses and working to overcome them. In the same way Gerry feels that those who win awards should get coaching in making speeches and answering interview questions.

He says you should:

- Aim to interest people, not bore them.
- Create word pictures or images for the audience.
- Think ahead of what you

a) can talk about
b) should talk about
c) wish to convey in the image you present of yourself, your sport and your country.

These are generic techniques which can be adapted to many speech making situations.

Individual task

Plan your opening words for the poolside interview after you have won a Gold Medal for Australia in the 200m freestyle.

You have been elected/selected sportsperson of the year at your Netball, Rugby, Athletics, Squash, Tennis or Soccer Club. Deliver your acceptance speech to your tutorial in three minutes..

Introductions

What should you do in a speech of introduction?
- interest the audience in the topic
- interest the audience in the speaker
- build the speaker's credibility
- be a transition from the activities and interests of the audience to those of the speaker.
- be amusing, but not at the expense of the speaker or audience

What shouldn't you do in a speech of introduction?
- go on too long (people are waiting for the main event)
- read off a boring list of all the speaker's qualifications
- talk about how you got the job of introducing the speaker
- admit that you know nothing about the speaker or the topic (take the time to find out).

"I'd just like to . . ."

These four words are very commonly used in speeches of introduction. They should be expunged from your repertoire because they immediately indicate that you have not prepared what you are going to say. Well–designed introductions capture attention "I'd just like to" loses attention. Firstly, it diminishes what you are saying "just" - means in this context "only" or "merely". Secondly, it's inaccurate. It's not that you *would like to;* you *are* actually doing it.

Individual task

Think of an interesting all–purpose opening that gets you started, and plan a one to two minute speech of introduction for one of the following people. (Some are dead. Imagine they are still alive.) If you don't know who they are look them up in *Who's Who*, an encyclopedia, or one of the biographical indexes held in your library. Remember to have an interesting introduction which links the audience with the speaker. Enhance rather than detract from the speaker's credibility. End clearly leaving the audience with a warm feeling for the speaker.

- Patrick White
- Shane Warne
- John Howard
- Nicoli Machiavelli
- Bob Dole
- Hilary Clinton
- Jacques Chirac
- Helen Darville
- Boris Yeltsin
- Cheryl Kernot
- Pat O'Shane
- Joan Sheldon
- Cleopatra
- Nicole Kidman
- Nelson Mandela
- Rene Denfield
- Rob Borbidge
- Liz Cunningham
- Yasser Arafat
- Germaine Greer
- Mahatma Gandhi
- Job
- Naomi Wolf
- Rupert Murdoch