

Some Sponsors Compose Olympians' Tweets

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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SOCHI — Between photos and insights about their Olympic experience, some Olympians are turning over their social media accounts to sponsors, agreeing to quotas of postings on Twitter and Facebook and letting other people send commercial messages in their name.

The agents for U.S. figure skaters Ashley Wagner and Gracie Gold both say sponsors draft some of their tweets, plugging their brands.

"This is the first Olympics where I actually have a social media calendar, where an athlete has to tweet or mention something on a given day," Gold's agent, Yuki Saegusa, said in an interview.

"We get a list of tweets or social media things that need to be posted and then we approve them for her," said Saegusa, senior vice president for Olympic clients at sports management giant IMG.

Although they "encourage" Gold to post the prepackaged commercial tweets to her 65,000 followers herself, sometimes others do it for her.

"We want it to be from her point of view, and from her mouth and from her fingers. So we try to get her to do them — mostly," Saegusa said.

"We are in a very new age now where a lot of advertising, or PR, or promotions, is social media. That is becoming a very important aspect of marketing."

Wagner's IMG agent, David Baden, said athletes' sponsorship deals are now starting to specify "how many tweets, how many Facebook mentions and even Instagram" photos they must post.

"That is part of the contract now. That is how important social media has become," he said. "The last Olympics that was not the case."

Baden, an IMG vice president for Olympic clients, worked with skating bronze medalist Joannie Rochette at the 2010 Vancouver Games.

He said they have access to Wagner's account, so they can post commercial tweets to her 60,000 followers.

"It is not like Ashley does not know about these. I mean we send her all these. She had to approve all of them, and so it is not that she does not know what is being said. She has seen it. She is part of this whole process," he said.

"It is just that with her schedule, and if we can make things easier, what's the difference?"

Sponsors make sure schedules of tweets are adhered to.

"We will get a message, usually, from the sponsor, and just say 'Just reminding you this week, these tweets,'" he said. "I will send it to my assistant. And she will just say; 'Yes, I have it already in queue to do it.'"

The agents did not specify which of their athletes' tweets in recent months were drafted and posted on their behalf.

The verified accounts of both Gold and Wagner — @GraceEGold and @AshWagner2010 — have referenced their own and U.S. Olympic Committee sponsors, in tweets and retweets.

It is not clear which recent postings were paid for, but after the Feb. 7 opening ceremony Gold sent out an Instagram photo of herself holding a lipstick applicator. "Couldn't forget the red lips," it read. As well as CoverGirl, her Twitter profile lists other sponsors: Visa, United Airlines, Procter & Gamble Family, Smucker's, Pandora Jewelry and Airweave.

Baden says to fulfill their contracts, simply retweeting a tweet first sent by a sponsor is not sufficient.

When on one occasion he used his own account to send a sponsor's tweet and then asked Wagner to retweet it, "they called me and said, 'No, no. No retweets. It has to come

from her.'''

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