

In the post-2013 era of Premier League football, where managerial churn happens with the regularity of transfer rumours and the squad often feels a mismatched jigsaw puzzle, there's an increasingly important but under-discussed skill: **media management**. Specifically, the art of knowing when not to "win" every press conference — a phrase that circulates with growing frequency yet remains misunderstood.

This blog post dives into that concept through four key lenses: the identity crisis since the glory days before and just after 2013, how frequent managerial changes and ill-fitting squads exacerbate PR challenges, the understated coaching impact of Carrick compared to the noise around him, and finally, the emotional volatility managers face in media pressure cycles. It's a deep session about *calm messaging*, *avoiding hype*, and how sometimes losing a rhetorical battle can be a strategic win.



1. The Post-2013 Identity Crisis: Why Pressers Became Pressure Cookers

Take a moment to rewind to the top-flight giants of pre-2013 — well-oiled machines, stable managerial tenures, and squads built with clarity. Post-2013, many clubs entered what I call an "identity crisis," where the DNA of the team blurred. Players well suited to one system found themselves shoehorned into another, and managers either arrived as heralded "project leaders" or stop-gap solutions. This background changes the dynamics of every press conference.

So, what does this mean for media management?

- **The Manager As a Brand:** When you're not confident in the squad makeup or uncertain of the tactical direction, trying to dominate every press interaction quickly becomes counterproductive. Managers often realise that over-promising or battling the agenda only fuels media scepticism and amplifies fan frustration.
- **Pressure Cooker Atmosphere:** The media doesn't just report on the manager; they shape the narrative. After a poor run, every question feels loaded, every phrase becomes a grab for a headline. Managers "winning" the presser day after day sounds good in theory but in practice often feels like yelling into a hurricane.
- **Language of Restraint:** Instead of ambitious declarations, the best approach sometimes involves crafting calm, measured messaging that manages expectations rather than inflates them.

2. Managerial Churn and Mismatched Squads: A Toxic Cocktail for PR Battles

The revolving door of managers is a tired cliché at this point, but it carries tangible consequences for how press conferences are approached. Each new manager brings a different style, outlook, and message. When the squad hasn't changed in line with these shifts — say, a defence built for counter-attacking football suddenly asked to play possession-based — the media will sense the disconnect immediately.



Some realities here:

1. **Short-Termism Wars Against Long-Term Messaging:** With pressure mounting for instant results, managers often oscillate between optimistic slogans and defensive postures. Trying to “win” every press conference pushes that narrative into overdrive and sets traps for future backfires.
2. **Players and Systems Out of Sync:** When you see midfielders functioning like an airport runway — endless flat, linear passing options with little vertical threat — the media will sniff that out, whether or not the manager wants to discuss it.
3. **Press Conferences Become PR Scrambles:** Rather than genuine football discussion, meetings feel like rehearsed rounds of damage limitation. Here, “not trying to win” can mean deploying calm deflection tactics instead of fighting every headline.

3. Carrick’s Coaching Impact vs PR Hype: A Case Study in Quiet Influence

Reflect on Michael Carrick’s time stepping into the managerial role at Manchester United. There was considerable buzz around the “new era” and supposed “revolution” he would spark. Yet, what stands out wasn’t how often he won press conferences with dazzling soundbites — it was the quiet, steady coaching impact embedded behind the scenes.

- **Substance Over Flash:** Whereas some managers go for throat-slashing rhetoric aiming to “dominate” the media narrative, Carrick instead cultivated calm messaging, avoided over-hyping every result, and stuck to manageable expectations.

- **Impact on Players Over Headlines:** It's easy to conflate a manager's success with their media presence. Carrick demonstrated that meaningful influence largely happens during training sessions, tactical adjustments, and player management — not during broadcasts or pressers.
- **Building Trust Against Cynicism:** In a club desperate for stability, his low-key approach gradually softened the loud narrative of chaos and rebuild slogans (and yes, I keep a running list of those). It illustrated how *not trying to win every press conference* can ultimately build credibility.

4. Emotional Volatility and Media Pressure Cycles: Why Managers Sometimes Need to Step Back

We ignore at our peril the emotional toll on managers operating in the Premier League spotlight. The media, fans, and boardroom alike all demand clarity and certainty, yet football's nature is endlessly chaotic — often absurd. This mismatch fuels volatile cycles of praise and vilification. Here's why stepping back from "winning" every press conference becomes crucial:

Emotional Trigger	Common Manager Reaction	Potential Media Outcome	Benefit of Withholding Full Engagement
Bad Result	Defensive, combative soundbites	Headline attacks, "losing the dressing room" myths	Allows time for internal regroup, avoids feeding negative cycle
Good Result	Overly optimistic statements	Creates unrealistic expectations	Manages expectations, reduces pressure for next game
Transfer Speculation	Overpromising or deflecting with hype	Increased speculation, fan confusion	Gives club control over messaging, reduces distractions

Every manager faces these cycles uniquely, but those who recognise the futility of trying to control the uncontrollable often adopt a more subdued approach. It's not weakness; it's pragmatic *media management* — highlighting calm messaging and deliberately avoiding hype.

Conclusion: Why "Not Winning" Press Conferences Can Be a Winning Strategy

In football's hyper-visible, headline-driven age, the media often acts like a gladiatorial arena. Managers feel pressured to come out swinging — to dominate every press conference with slick quips and battle-ready slogans. But as the post-2013 Premier League landscape shows us, success frequently comes from the opposite approach.

"Not trying to win every press conference" means prioritising trust over theatrics, calm messaging over spin, and managing expectations rather than feeding hype. **It's an acknowledgement that the real work happens on the training ground and pitch, not in front of cameras.** Whether it's managing through an identity crisis, handling a mismatched squad, quietly embedding coaching impact like Carrick, or weathering emotional volatility, the best managers understand the power of restraint in media management.

So next time you hear **set piece defending** the phrase, remember: Sometimes the biggest win you can score is by simply not entering the battle.