Title: METHOD OF PROVIDING A DIGITAL ATHLETE PROFILE

Abstract: A method of providing a web-based sports or academic social network web page includes providing a digital athlete or academic profile portion configured to provide various athlete or academic information and providing a gallery portion having at least one of photographs or videos uploadable by a user. The athlete or academic information includes one or more of statistics, school information, contact information, athletic bio, academic information, news and events, athletic awards, and recommendations.
METHOD OF PROVIDING A DIGITAL ATHLETE PROFILE

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The present application claims priority under 35 U.S.C. §119(c) to United States Provisional Patent Application 60/813,334 filed on June 14, 2006, the entirety of which is incorporated by reference herein.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The invention is directed to a method of providing a sports-based and/or academic-based network portal with a personal expression of a youth sports, club sports athlete and/or student, and in particular a profile of their athletic and/or academic capabilities.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

2. Related Art

[0003] Many previous approaches to creating social networks via the World Wide Web have not been directed to youth sports, club sports or student academics. These approaches did not include any ability to display beneficial information for the athlete and/or student and advertising could not be directed to an athlete, student, fan or the like.

[0004] Accordingly, there is a need for a web portal that can provide a personal expression and social networking for the youth sports athlete, club sports athlete, or student and moreover allow for targeted advertising.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] The invention meets the foregoing need and allows for a method of providing a sports and/or social networking portal that allows the youth sports, club sport athlete, student athlete with a place for personal expression within the sports niche.

[0006] In one embodiment, the invention is directed to a social networking system that is sports and/or student-activity specific. Accordingly, the invention may encompass content
based on kids playing sports from their first sports experiences through high school sports. These sports include high school sports, youth sports, club sports, and/or other sports organizations whose participants may include ages six through high school age athletes.

[0007] Users of the system are provided with various web-based tools to generate and create their personal expression. These tools include various different functions including an athlete profile, activities profile and/or academic profile. Each of these tools are described as a Digital Athlete/Activities/Academic Profile or DAP. The DAP is a multi task tool that allows young students and/or student athletes to present their academic, athletic and other accomplishments via a fun, creative and dynamic tool that allows for multi media presentations.

[0008] The DAP tool allows photographs, music, videos, statistical information, academic recommendations, awards, and/or other distinctive records of young athletes and/or students. The DAP also provides the students and/or student athletes with organizational and personal management tools. These include online interactive two-way calendar systems that synchronize with parents’ schedules. Additionally, these schedules may also synchronize with other young students and student athletes living in the same home. Synchronization of the schedules allows parents and/or students to better deal with the often chaotic lifestyle that plagues young students that are involved in school activities, as well as, student athletic activities in his or her family.

[0009] The DAP also serves as a one-stop entertainment source. The DAP has other features integrated such as a sports and activity specific information source, such as RSS (really simple syndication).

[0010] The DAP allows for the display of personalized music and portal interface, photographs and videos of the student athlete’s sports life, access and a links to other
athlete’s DAPs, and the student athlete’s teams and activities websites. Moreover, the DAP provides a link to other high school and youth sports websites.

The users of the DAP is able to communicate by using the website provided text messaging, email and/or instant messaging functions. In addition, the DAP provides powerful search capabilities to allow the student and/or student athlete to find other students and student athletes by using different filters such as competition level, school, common interests, activities, sports, and the like. The DAP is accessible by college recruiters and admissions officers seeking student athletes and/or well-rounded students engaged in extracurricular activities.

Additional features, advantages, and embodiments of the invention are set forth or will be apparent from consideration of the following detailed description, drawings, and claims. Moreover, it is to be understood that both the foregoing summary of the invention and the following detailed description are exemplary and intended to provide further explanation without limiting the scope of the invention as claimed.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The accompanying drawings, which are included to provide a further understanding of the invention, are incorporated in and constitute a part of this specification, illustrate embodiments of the invention and together with the detailed description serve to explain the principles of the invention. No attempt is made to show structural details of the invention in more detail than may be necessary for a fundamental understanding of the invention and the various ways in which it may be practiced. In the drawings:

Figure 1 shows an upper portion of a sports social networking portal constructed according to the principles of the invention;

Figure 2 shows a mid-portion of a sports social networking portal constructed according to the principles of the invention;
[0016] Figure 3 shows a lower portion of a sports social networking portal constructed according to the principles of the invention;

[0017] Figure 4 shows a site menu for use with the Figures 1 to 3 sports social networking portal;

[0018] Figure 5 shows the digital athlete profile for use with the sports social networking portal of Figures 1 to 3; and

[0019] Figure 6 shows many of the capabilities and options available in the digital athlete profile for use with the sports social networking portal of Figures 1 to 3, including but not limited to a Personal Media Distribution tool for distributing personal media to various communications mediums and entertainment devices.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0020] The embodiments of the invention and the various features and advantageous details thereof are explained more fully with reference to the non-limiting embodiments and examples that are described and/or illustrated in the accompanying drawings and detailed in the following description. It should be noted that the features illustrated in the drawings are not necessarily drawn to scale, and features of one embodiment may be employed with other embodiments as the skilled artisan would recognize, even if not explicitly stated herein. Descriptions of well-known components and processing techniques may be omitted so as to not unnecessarily obscure the embodiments of the invention. The examples used herein are intended merely to facilitate an understanding of ways in which the invention may be practiced and to further enable those of skill in the art to practice the embodiments of the invention. Accordingly, the examples and embodiments herein should not be construed as limiting the scope of the invention, which is defined solely by the appended claims and applicable law. Moreover, it is noted that like reference numerals represent similar parts throughout the several views of the drawings.
Figures 1, 2, and 3 show an exemplary implementation of the DAP. In particular, the DAP may include four different major areas. These areas include facilitating interaction, entertainment, information and education, and community networking. In particular, the area of facilitating interaction includes a calendar, blogs, SMS messaging and communication, common interests group and networking, and broadcast and cable channels. More specifically, the calendar includes various calendar features for the student or student athlete. The calendar is able to accept various dates for sports and/or academic-related activities whether entered by the student and/or student athlete, the parents, coaches and/or teachers.

The calendar feature supports the ability to make various events or calendar inserts public or private. In this regard, an individual may designate who can see the calendar events which allows for increased privacy. Moreover, the calendar feature allows for the insertion of group events. In particular, a team coach may designate a team and, then when inserting a particular calendar event, may insert it for the entire team at one time. Such integration allows for the entire team to be integrated with a single action and, moreover, allows for the integration of a school calendar. This arrangement allows teachers and/or coaches to receive and send various alerts and messaging based on various calendar events. Also, the calendar provides for reminders for the various upcoming activities through the DAP interface and/or any other form of communication associated with it. Additionally, the calendar includes various filtering capabilities. This allows the DAP user to filter various calendar events by sport, practice, school event, personal and the like. Altogether, the calendaring capability allows for integration with various teams, parents, siblings and other network partners. In addition, the calendar feature provides a two-way communication link and includes advising features with the students, parents, and/or coaches and teachers.

The DAP further includes an online journal (blog). Members will be able to share their personal journals with other members. The facilitate interaction section includes
SMS-type messaging and communications through the use of instant messaging and/or other known forms of chat or electronic communication.

[0024] The blog feature of the DAP provides for archive support. In particular, the blog feature has the capability to archive information over time and store the same. The blog feature also provides commenting support. In this regard, the blog allows for other DAP users to provide comments and notes to the active blog. Finally, the blog provides deletion support in order to delete subject matter that is no longer desired to be part of the blog.

[0025] Additionally, the DAP allows for the generation or creation of common interest groups and networking. In particular, a student and/or student athlete is able to create or join a common interest group and network with the various individuals that are part of, or that join, this group. Finally, the facilitate interaction portion allows for broadcast or cable channel information to be sent to various DAPs and/or received by various DAPs. Videos may be streamed through the Digital Sports infrastructure that could be seen by all DAP members.

[0026] The DAP further includes the ability to provide entertainment. In particular, the DAP includes the ability to generate multimedia presentations. The multimedia presentations may include photographs, music and/or videos. The photographs, music and the videos may be of the student and/or student athlete or may include some of the various school functions or sports functions related therewith.

[0027] Additionally, the student or student athlete is able to customize their particular DAP portal with a particular interface or look. This can include background colors, music, wallpaper and the like. Also, the ability to customize the user interface provides the freedom to choose different user interface skins for the DAP. The DAP tools allow the user to position the DAP contents wherever they desire and change the contents as they desire.
[0028] The messaging capability provides a DAP user with the ability to send various SMS messages and the like to other users in their network of DAPs. Also, the SMS messaging allows for DAP users to send invites to other DAP users electronically.

[0029] The multimedia portion of the DAP provides for the display and upload of various photographs and videos. In particular, the multimedia portion of the DAP provides a capability to upload and display a photo gallery with album-type support. Similarly, the multimedia portion of the DAP provides a video gallery capability allowing videos to be uploaded and displayed again with album-type support. Additionally, the multimedia portion of the DAP allows for control of comments with respect to the various photographic images and/or videos. Users of the DAP may allow for various images and videos to be rated with respect to how well they like or dislike the various photographs and/or images. Also, a Personal Media Distribution tool empowers the user to distribute their personal media to various communications mediums including, but not limited to cell phones, smart phones, and other integrated communications and entertainment devices. Finally, the multimedia portion of the DAP may allow for images and/or videos to be imported from the main Digital Sports portal into the personal DAP of the student or student athlete.

[0030] The DAP allows for the collection, upload and display of sports news, sports statistics, various sports articles and other educational-type features for display on the DAP. Also, the DAP allows for RSS-type information subscriptions for displaying various RSS-type media content. The RSS information subscription information allows users to subscribe to content both internal to the DAP system and also external to the DAP, such as for example, news websites and the like.

[0031] The DAP allows for personalized or related links to be added to the DAP that are directed to a particular area of interest of the user. The DAP may also include an HTML
wysiwyg-type editor. In particular, HTML editor allows a DAP user to design and generate a web page using straightforward-type editing actions.

The DAP also includes various other sources of information including FAQs (frequently asked questions), a knowledge base and announcements section. Accordingly, the DAP user creates, adds or accesses each of these type contents to enhance enjoyment of their personal DAP or other DAPs. The DAP FAQs and knowledge base provides a central area where athletes view answers to questions or the knowledge base for a particular sports and/or academic-related subject. Additionally, it provides the ability for a posting to the knowledge base. The DAP also allows for the inclusion of online resumes, alumni services, and recruiting tools.

The online resume of the DAP allows for athletes to maintain their resume for college and the like. The resume may be based on multiple resume templates that are available through the DAP system. The alumni services allows alumni to maintain their DAP and coordinate their activities through the system. The alumni service includes various online directory services.

The DAP also provides college recruiters with various recruiting tools. In particular, a recruiting tools section provides recruiters with tools to search and choose for the right candidate. In particular, a recruiter is able to search using various search criteria based on statistics, academic information, geographic considerations, and the like.

The DAP further includes generic search capabilities. In particular, a search is allowed from a public website, as well as, from the DAP portal. The search within the DAP allows for filters and/or categories to enhance the search. The DAP system may allow for the support of keyword searches as well.

The DAP system allows networking capabilities with other athletes and/or students’ DAP. In this regard, users are able to view other DAPs within their network or
their friends in one single place. Users are able to communicate, via alerts and SMS-type messages 94 within their network.

[0037] An additional feature that is used with the DAP is the control and monitoring feature. In particular, the DAPs include personal password assignments so that the content is protected by these passwords. A user is able to limit access and control of their DAP based on the personal password. The DAP system allows for a peer reporting system so that, if a user or peer of the DAP system sees any improper subject matter, they will be able to report this to a system administrator, coach, and/or teacher for control and/or removal.

Additionally, coaches, sports administrators and others have access to all of the DAPs with a special, over-riding password in order to control and monitor content. Finally, parents are able to control content through special parental control features to ensure that the students or student athletes have a limited and controlled content as directed by their parents.

[0038] The DAP also allows for other entertaining-type network capabilities including favorite DAP pages and/or most visited-type features. Accordingly, the DAP system allows for voting on what is the favorite DAP or allows for a counting capability to count the number of web page hits to determine the most visited DAP.

[0039] Figure 1 shows an exemplary sports portal including a sports social networking portal 100 that includes an upper portal portion 102. The portal may also be referred to as a vortol (vertical portal). More specifically, the sports social networking portal 100 may be implemented as an html-type web page or the like. Sports social networking portal 100 may include upper portion 102 that is connected to a mid-portal portion 202 (shown in Figure 2), that may be connected to a lower portal portion 302 (shown in Figure 3). Accordingly, the Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3 portions together form a web page that forms the sports social networking portal 100 web page. Of course these aspects and features of the invention
may be separate pages, may operate together as shown, or take any other form known in the art.

[0040] Upper portal portion 102 may include various advertisements 104. These advertisements 104 may be based on advertisement modules that are known in the art. These advertisements 104 may be focused directly on the type of sport, age group or the like that is specific to this sport’s social networking portal 100. Further, the upper portal portion 102 may include an image of the player 106 for this specific web page. The player is able to upload to his or her own sports social networking portal 100, an image 106 so as to include it on this web page. Further, upper portal portion 102 of sports social networking portal 100 includes a site menu 108. The sports social networking portal 100 also includes various text-based stories 110. The sports social networking portal 100 also includes navigation buttons 114 and search capability 93 with a search input portion 116. The ability to display banner advertisements 112 is also provided in various embodiments of the invention.

[0041] A mid-portal portion 202 of sports social networking portal 100 also includes site menu 108, text-based stories 110 and the banner advertisements 112 (Figure 2). Additionally, mid-portal portion 202 of sports social networking portal 100 includes a chat section 204, a contacts section 206, a discussions section 208, an events calendar 210, and an announcements section 212. A lower portal portion 302 of sports social networking portal 100 includes a news feeds section 304, a sponsor advertisement section 306, a my gallery section 308 and a My DAP (Digital Athlete Profile) section 310.

[0042] Accordingly, sports social networking portal 100 may be divided into three different sections or may be one continuous section. It should be understood that the particular layout shown in Figures 1 to 3 is only exemplary. The various sections and portions of sports social networking portal shown in Figures 1 to 3 can take any form and can be implemented in any known way. Additionally, sports social networking portal 100 does
not need to include each and every section as described in conjunction with the exemplary
embodiment of Figures 1 to 3. Portal 100 may include less or additional features or portions.

[0043] Site menu 108 includes various hyperlinks to portions of the sports social
networking portal 100 (Figure 4). In particular, hyperlink 402 may direct a website user to
the digital athlete profile home. In other words, the user may select this link and it will take
the user to the DAP home. The roster 404 link takes a web user to the roster of the various
teams that are associated with the player of sports social networking portal 100. Hyperlink
406 links the website user to the statistics of the school, team, and/or player associated with
sports social networking portal 100. Contact information may be obtained by hyperlink 410
that is based on the school, team, or player associated with sports social networking portal
100. The athlete’s biography is obtained by clicking on athlete bio 412 of site menu 108.
Athlete bio 412 provides various information with respect to the athlete. The academic info
(information) link 414 provides academic information regarding the player. Hyperlink 416
directs a user to the athlete’s awards, school’s awards, and/or team’s awards. Finally, the
recommendations hyperlink 418 of site menu 108 provides a user with various sports or
academic-based recommendations for the student athlete.

[0044] The text-based story section 110 (Figure 1) is provided by a user of sports social
networking portal 100 to be able to upload pictures and/or text to provide a story-based
and/or interest-based feature for the sports social networking portal 100.

[0045] Events calendar section 210 of sports social networking portal 100 has the ability
to allow entry of information regarding practice schedules, team schedules, game schedules
and the like. Events calendar 210 may also have the ability to allow a coach to enter calendar
information and allow it to be migrated to each athlete’s particular event calendar 210. Also,
a parent is able to enter information into the events calendar 210 so that a parent with
multiple children participating in sports is able to coordinate the various calendars of their
children in order to coordinate the various sports schedules. This feature of the invention allows a parent to work through and resolve various possible schedule conflicts.

[0046] The chat feature 204 of sports social networking portal 100 allows the student athlete to chat with fellow athletes, coaches, parents and the like regarding various needs, reminders, etc. Parents are able to chat with coaches and players to provide reminders, praise, and the like. Accordingly, both events calendar 210 and chat feature 204 allow two-way communication between parents, coaches and athletes.

[0047] The contact feature 206 of sports social networking portal 100 allows a parent, coach, and/or athlete to add contact information regarding the parents, coaches, and/or athletes. This information may include name, position, email, telephone numbers or the like.

[0048] The discussions feature 208 allows coaches, parents, and athletes to start and/or engage in various discussions in sports-related matters. Both coaches and athletic directors have access to sports social networking portal 100 to prevent inappropriate use. Discussions portion 208 allows for communication with other invited student athletes, but the content and audience (limited access) may be limited to one degree or another (shown generally at 209 in Figure 6) as is known in the art.

[0049] The student athlete is able to select various sports websites to provide an RSS type (Really Simple Syndication – “file format” a form of web syndication used by news websites and weblogs) of news feed to news feeds portion 304. In this way, the student athlete’s favorite teams or favorite news journals may be provided on his or hers own personalized sports social networking portal web page.

[0050] The announcement section 212 includes various different coach, parent, advertisement-type announcements. For example, ticket sales on other sports-related type of announcements.
[0051] The my gallery portion 308 provides a way in which the student athlete may upload various photographs and/or videos for viewing on the website of sports social networking portal 100.

[0052] The digital athlete profile section 310 includes a separate scrollable window within sports social networking portal 100 (Figure 5). Alternatively, digital athlete profile 310 may be a separate web page or may be included in the web page of the athlete in sports social networking portal 100. The digital athlete profile shown in Figure 5 may include an uploaded photograph of the student athlete, the student athlete’s name and various sports-based criteria including height, weight, vertical jump, sports position, speed, strength and the like. Also, digital athlete profile section 310 may include one or more of statistics of the athlete, school information on the athlete, contact information of the athlete, the athlete’s bio, academic information of the student athlete, news and events of the athlete, the athlete’s awards, and recommendations for the athlete in section 502. Digital athlete profile 310 includes the ability to upload various videos and game highlights 504. These highlights 504 can include photographs (including photos, video highlights, game tapes, and the like) and also other various sports highlights for viewing by a user. The information that is provided to the digital athlete profile 310 may be gathered by various, coaches, athletic directors, fans, player, interns and other people who are willing to accumulate the information (i.e., statistics, video, digital pictures, etc.) and upload it to the website.

[0053] The digital athlete’s profile allows college recruiters to review the player’s resume including the photos, the video highlights, game tapes, statistics, academic and other extracurricular activities in order to consider the athlete for scholarships and the like. As further show in Figure 5, digital athlete’s profile 310 may include school information as shown in section 506 and may also include various statistics in section 508 and the like. The digital athlete profile 310 further includes the ability for the athlete to personalize this
particular portion by providing or designating various backgrounds, music, sports memorabilia and the like to be associated with his or her profile 310 or “locker.”

Accordingly, sports social networking portal 100 provides a way in which a student athlete generates and maintains a personalized sports-based web page that provides a way in which the student athlete can exhibit a personal expression within the sports niche or genre. This personalized web page generated through a sports social networking portal 100 may be accessed by coaches, athletic directors, and parents to prevent inappropriate use and also by parents for the exact same reason. The personalized web page formed through sports social networking portal 100 provides organizational tools for the parents and players, communication systems and tools, personal expression, recruiting access and the like. Also, the student athlete may distribute their personal media to various communications mediums including, but not limited to cell phones, smart phones, and other integrated communications and entertainment devices via a Personal Media Distribution tool.

REFERENCE TO ATTACHED DOCUMENTS

The document attached hereto is expressly incorporated by reference herein in its entirety.

While the invention has been described in terms of exemplary embodiments, those skilled in the art will recognize that the invention can be practiced with modifications in the spirit and scope of the appended claims. These examples given above are merely illustrative and are not meant to be an exhaustive list of all possible designs, embodiments, applications or modifications of the invention.
WHAT IS CLAIMED:

1. A method of providing a web-based sports social network web page comprising:
   providing a digital athlete profile portion configured to provide various athlete
   information; and
   providing a gallery portion having at least one of photographs or videos uploadable by
   a user,
   wherein the athlete information comprises at least one of statistics, school
   information, contact information, athletic bio, academic information, news and events,
   athletic awards, and recommendations.

2. The method according to claim 1 further comprising an advertisement portion
   configured to provide advertisement-based content for display on the web page.

3. The method according to claim 1 further comprising an image portion allowing the
   display of uploaded images on the web page.

4. The method according to claim 1 further comprising a site menu providing various
   navigational controls to the web page.

5. The method according to claim 1 further comprising a text-based story portion
   providing at least one of story or images to the web page.

6. The method according to claim 1 further comprising an advertisement banner portion
   for providing banner-based advertisements to the web page.

7. The method according to claim 1 further comprising a chat portion for providing two-
   way chat communication to the web page.

8. The method according to claim 1 further comprising a contact portion for listing at
   least one of a name, role, email, telephone and other contact information to the web page.

9. The method according to claim 1 further comprising a discussion portion providing
   discussion capability through the web page.
10. The method according to claim 1 further comprising an events calendar portion providing events calendar capabilities on the web page.

11. The method according to claim 1 further comprising an announcement portion to provide various announcement information for display on the web page.

12. The method according to claim 1 further comprising a news feed portion for providing various news feed information for display on the web page.

13. The method according to claim 1 further comprising a sponsor portion for providing various sponsor-related information on the web page.

14. The method according to claim 1 further comprising distributing personal media to at least one of communications mediums.

15. The method according to claim 14 wherein said personal media comprise at least one of a cell phone, a smart phones, and an integrated communications and entertainment device.

16. A method of providing a web-based academic social network web page comprising:
   providing a digital academic profile portion configured to provide various academic information; and
   providing a gallery portion having at least one of photographs or videos uploadable by a user,
   wherein the academic information comprises at least one of statistics, school information, contact information, academic bio, academic information, news and events, athletic awards, and recommendations.

17. The method according to claim 14 further comprising an advertisement portion configured to provide advertisement-based content for display on the web page.

18. The method according to claim 14 further comprising an image portion allowing the display of uploaded images on the web page.
19. The method according to claim 14 further comprising a site menu providing various navigational controls to the web page.

20. The method according to claim 14 further comprising a text-based story portion providing at least one of story or images to the web page.

21. The method according to claim 1 further comprising an advertisement banner portion for providing banner-based advertisements to the web page.

22. The method according to claim 1 further comprising a chat portion for providing two-way chat communication to the web page.

23. The method according to claim 14 further comprising a contact portion for listing at least one of a name, role, email, telephone and other contact information to the web page.

24. The method according to claim 14 further comprising a discussion portion providing discussion capability through the web page.

25. The method according to claim 14 further comprising an events calendar portion providing events calendar capabilities on the web page.

26. The method according to claim 14 further comprising an announcement portion to provide various announcement information for display on the web page.

27. The method according to claim 14 further comprising a news feed portion for providing various news feed information for display on the web page.

28. The method according to claim 14 further comprising a sponsor portion for providing various sponsor-related information on the web page.
FIGURE 1
FIGURE 2
CONTACT INFORMATION