

Reporting Sports News in a Newscast

First course, Third grading period, Week 7

Sports are certainly part of a school's and a community's life. Sportscasters must have a strong interest in, and knowledge of, the games they announce and cover for listeners. This lesson provides an introduction to covering sports — writing the sports news wrap or voicer to report on school teams.



Enduring Understanding

Listeners want accuracy in reporting of sports scores and highlights, coverage of all sports in their area and knowledgeable, lively presentations of behind-the-scenes happenings.



Essential Questions

What level of language and depth of coverage is needed to properly cover school sports? What are the basics of covering sports news beyond reporting the final scores?



Objectives and Outcome

- Students will examine levels of language, from jargon to technical terms, involved in covering sports and evaluate when to use each.
- Students will complete research and determine the most reliable sources.
- Students will conduct interviews.
- Students will write a sports report.



Suggested Time

One week



Resources and Materials

- "Sports Jargon," Activity 3 and "Jargon in Plain English," The Washington Post Newspaper In Education online manual (www.washpost.com/nie), Manual, Sports section, pages 15-18
- Recordings of sports scores and games results being given. Recordings of sports news being presented in a radio newscast.
- Professional models for this type of reporting: ESPN radio, Stuart Scott, Dan Patrick, Tom Goldman/NPR.
- "Sports Guidelines and Style." Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law with Internet Guide and Glossary
- Sports Dictionary for Spectators, Amateurs & Professionals. The Lewtan Book Line, Hartford, Conn.
- "News and Sports," Writing for Television, Radio and New Media, pages 170-180 (Chapter 5)
- "Sports," Announcing, pages 264-265



Procedure

1. Review the basic elements of news. The fundamental techniques of gathering news apply to sports news: “Anchor work in sports parallels that of news. Sports reporting also translates the role of radio or TV reporter from news to sports,” as stated in Announcing, “Types of Sports Assignments.”
2. Cover jargon, terms specific to a sport and other technical language that may be needed to cover each sport, its players and issues. Discuss when jargon is appropriate to be used. Robert Hilliard in *Writing About Television, Radio and New Media* states: “The language of sports is more colloquial, and although technical terms should be avoided so the general audience won’t be confused, sports jargon and expressions in common use relating to a specialized area of sports are not only acceptable, but necessary to establish expertise by the sportscaster and empathy between the sportscaster and the audience.”

If time allows and you need a few laughs, you might visit The Sports Cliché List (www.sportscliche.com/) for examples of clichés and hackneyed expressions by category.

Acquaint students with “Sports Guidelines and Style” in the Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law with Internet Guide and Glossary. It should be considered the first source to review, confirm or learn terminology and basic rules of the game.

Give students “Sports Vocabulary.” A quiz on these terms might be included with a current events quiz.

3. Brainstorm reliable sources for stats, records, history sport-by-sport, and rules. Cover how scores are read. How is it clear which team won when the scores cannot be seen?

Listen to tape of sport scores being given by several sportscasters. Discuss the pacing, order and use of numbers.

4. Share the established procedure that your radio station (or sports webcast) follows in reporting before, during and after games. Since every school has its rules of when players may be contacted, review the rules for teams in your school. For example, may you ride the team bus to conduct interviews or talk to players before the game? Brainstorm with students how to get a story within the context of these policies. These may include interviewing the coach several days before the game or changing the focus of what news you will report.

When setting up appointments, try to meet with coaches and players when they are available other than during practice or a game. Does your school allow pre-game interviews? Who is allowed in the locker room post-game?

5. Review how to conduct an interview (See “Introduction to the Interview” from First course, First grading period, Week 3).

6. It is now time to give students examples of what professional sports newscasts sound like. We recommend that you use more than one sport to illustrate coverage. Tape several sports newscasts, at least one should be a local radio station. If possible, get a sample of a recent sports news script.

Play the recordings of sports news being given on-air by several sportscasters. What elements are included? How does this differ from the straight reporting of game results?

Is there a difference in sports coverage between an all-sports station and an all-news station? During a 15-minute period, how much time is spent providing sports news? How many share only the scores? What images jump out?

7. Students are now ready to select a sport (Make sure all sports, for men and women are selected) to report. Have students help plan and then assign a sports wrap. Give students “Plan Your Coverage.” Review the questions and examples.

8. If arranging interviews becomes too cumbersome, you may wish to invite an athlete or coach to be interviewed and taped during class. If this is necessary, have all students prepare questions. Each student should ask at least one question.

9. Students will use their own interviews or the one taped in class to prepare the sports wrap that might be incorporated into a newscast. Before they put it together, they should each be able to explain in one sentence the news angle they are covering. They should choose their tape — no more than :20 and get it approved before they begin to write the anchor intro and their copy. The total wrap cannot be more than one minute including the anchor intro. Do they need ambience behind themselves to smooth out the transitions in and out of the tape in the wrap?



Homework

After brainstorming reliable sources, conduct a scavenger hunt of sports record holders using four or more sources. Get 10 records from 10 different sports. Students must include the source of the information. Students may use the Internet as one of the sources, but may not limit their research to that one source.

After the second day of class, students should check the week’s game schedule, set up their interviews, and plan their interview questions.

Interviews may need to be conducted after school or during or after practice. Some athletes or coaches may be available during the class period or lunch.

Have students list three scenes they saw in a descriptive way. For example: The red and gold uniforms, the rookie players were breathing hard on this their first practice of the year. The fans waved their hats and swayed in the stands as Tom took to the field. Have students use these kind of quick descriptors in their news wrap.



Assessment

We encourage teachers to include a sports question on each current events quiz. This will keep students aware of the news that is taking place in this arena. A vocabulary quiz might be given on terms from news and sports lists.

Record, write and edit a one-minute sports wrap. When the assignment is turned in, include a log of research conducted, with whom and when interviews were held, time spent at the sporting event(s), and time spent writing the script and editing the final product AND a focus statement of one sentence on what the wrap is about.

If a student finishes the one-minute wrap before the week is concluded, have him or her produce a second one from any tape available for extra credit.



Academic Content Standards

Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes. (Standard 5, NCTE/IRA Standards for the English Language Arts)

Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information). (Standard 12, NCTE/IRA Standards for the English Language Arts)

Analyze the effect on the reader's or viewer's emotions of text and image in print journalism, and images, sound, and text in electronic journalism, distinguishing techniques used in each to achieve those effects. (DCPS English Language Arts, 10.M.2)

Create media presentations that effectively use graphics, images, and/or sound to present a distinctive point of view on a topic. (DCPS English Language Arts, 10.M.4)



Industry Standards and Expectations

Develop and deliver formal and informal presentations using appropriate media to engage and inform audiences. (F02.4, Career Cluster Project: Communications Skills)

Define the terminology associated with journalism. (Performance Element, Pathway KS Statement: Demonstrate writing processes used for various journalism media. States' Career Clusters, National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium)

Demonstrate how to cultivate sources for stories. (Performance Element, Pathway KS Statement: Demonstrate writing processes used for various journalism media. States' Career Clusters, National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium)

Analyze announcing competence. (Performance Element, Pathway KS Statement: Demonstrate the ability to deliver a broadcast production. States' Career Clusters, National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium)

Plan Your Coverage

Name _____

Date / /

Successful coverage of athletes, issues and sporting events requires knowledge and preparation.

1. What is the sports news you are covering? What is your angle?
2. Who do you need to interview for your story?
(Example: The star athlete)
3. If he or she is not available, whom do you interview?
(Example: The star player is on the way to the hospital. Who else will you interview? Does this latest development change your planned sports report?)
4. What kind of research do you need to do to put this news story in context?
(Example: He is the third player to sprain his ankle this season.)
5. When should interviews be completed?
(Example: This interview is three days before the next match. Who will you interview the day before the match? The day of the match?)
6. What do you need to know to put sports action in context?
(Example: She broke the school long jump record. What does this mean? Was it by 1/4 inch or one foot? Be specific and descriptive.)
7. Who is responsible for getting tape in studio and in the field? What should you record?
(Example: Is each person responsible for getting his or her own tape? Do they work in pairs sharing responsibility?)
 - You will need at least one actuality for the news wrap. Be sure to get several so choices can be made. One actuality may be used in the first sports wrap and another in the update or later in the season to put a particular game in perspective of the season.
 - The general rule is to get at least one minute of ambience. In sports, there cannot be too much tape of ambience. How can you be sure to get the ambience of the big play of the game? This cannot be faked. Keep recording to get the play and the crowd cheering.
8. What larger stories are there to tell as the season continues?
9. Is there a profile to do of one or two of the athletes as the year winds up and all sports have been played in the school overall? How would you do it using the tape you have collected all year?
10. Save all your tape until the season ends. Better yet, archive the tape for possible profiling years later. Be sure the log (including running audio time and notes on details in the tape) reflects what you have by sport, game date, athlete, coach and topic.

Sports Vocabulary

Anchor	The main announcer who reads the newscast from start to finish; narrator or person who coordinates a newscast in which several correspondents give reports
Announcer	Gives running commentary on sports events and personalities; sometimes known as the play-by-play expert in a team
Color Analyst	Provides informative insights into the sport, anecdotes about the game and players, puts plays into perspective
Commentary	An explanation or report
Feature	Straightforward report on an event, situation, person or idea
Jargon	Technical terminology or idiom or a particular group
Narrator	One who gives an account or description of events; supplies commentary; tells a story
Sportscast	Broadcast of a sports event or of sports news
Sports Wrap	News about sports with tape (actuality, recorded interview)
Stats	Statistics, the numbers; collecting, analyzing, interpreting and presenting numerical data
Voice-actuality	A report from a sportscaster in which an actuality (sound of an event or recorded interview) is included
Voicer	News without tape