

Sports Writing: The Season Recap



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>Why we write about sports: "There's something about sports that brings people together, and besides that, helps people get through unbelievably difficult challenges. That's what I get to write about, and yes, it's important." – **Alicia DelGallo, sports reporter, Orlando Sentinel/editor of Pro Soccer USA**

>The assignment: As a sportswriter on your yearbook's staff, your challenge is to write a season recap story that summarizes and captures the essence of a team's season at your school. Your job is to make that story accurate, interesting, complete, about 250-300 words, and worth reading. How to do that?

Do Your Homework: Find out everything you can about the team, the players and the coaches by reading stories about them in your campus paper, the local newspaper and any websites that cover local high school sports. Contact the coach and arrange to meet him or her and to visit and observe practices and games. Hang out. Your knowledge will cause people you interview on the team to trust you more and will make your story authoritative and authentic.

Focus on People: Your story should spotlight interesting people in defining moments that reveal character and personality. Conduct interviews with key players. Use good direct quotations to lend voice, authenticity and emotion to the story. The recap story is not about strategy, analysis or commentary. This isn't ESPN. It's yearbook. You have a different job. But learning how to do this well can eventually get you to the big time (see Alicia DelGallo above).

Use a Snapshot to Show the Big Picture: We're not talking about an actual photo here. We're talking about turning your recap story into a word picture. Focus on a player, game or scene that defines and characterizes the entire season.

Be Smart With Stats: Include the most relevant stats, such as the team's record. But don't let the statistics get in the way of the story. Don't use numbers to show off. Rather, use the numbers to show something telling and compelling about the team's season.

Identify the Theme: Find a theme – a storyline or narrative arc – that runs through the season like a thread and use that theme to tie your story together. You'll only see a theme if you are familiar with

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the team and its season.

> **X-ray Read a Sample Story:** “Laid-Back Lifters” from Boone High School’s Legend yearbook

> **Practice Assignment:** Your turn to write a practice season recap on your school’s girls lacrosse team (see the “Season Recap Story Practice: Fact Sheet.”). Keep in mind, your instructor has done all of the reporting for you. On your staff, **you** will be responsible for doing the interviews, hanging out at practices, covering games, collecting the stats and gathering all of the information on this fact sheet. Writing isn’t the hard part of covering sports. **Reporting** is the hard part. But without the reporting, you won’t have much content to turn into a good story. So lace up and let’s go.

Season Recap Story Practice: Fact Sheet

>Assignment: Assume you are a yearbook staff member who covers sports. Write a 250-word season recap story about your school's girls varsity lacrosse team (The Bears). Use this fact sheet.

Season record: 18-4 overall (5-1 in District 3 play) Ranked 3rd in the state and 46th nationally.

Coach: Steve Efland (Quote: "We just have some exceptional players and they all work together. A lot of teams have one or two go-to players. We have five or six, seven go-to players on offense. We spread it around. We're just hard to stop because there's no one person that the other team can really key on.")

Team average: 18 goals per game

Team average: 10.3 assists per game

Most goals in a game: Against Northview High School (23-13) on March 13.

Most heartbreaking loss: 18-19 loss in overtime to rival Oviedo High School on March 2.

Closest game: 18-16 win over Lake Mary High School on March 24.

Greatest margin of victory: 22-1 victory over Bishop Moore High School on Feb. 12.

District competition: Even though the Bears lost to rival Oviedo earlier in the season, they came back to beat Oviedo 21-11 to win the District 3 championship game in April.

Farthest the team got this season: The Bears came within one game of making it to the state championship. The Bears lost in the state semifinal game to Vero Beach 24-9.

Season's top scorer: Kenna Wick, a junior, who scored 77 goals on the season and averaged 4 goals per game.

Honorable mention: Maggie Flatley, a senior and team captain, who led the team overwhelmingly on assists with 103. Quote from Flatley: "We work together and we trust each other. It's very important to have a complex offense to trick up the defense." Quote from Coach Efland about Flatley: "She moves the offense, she has great vision on the field and she's unselfish, which is her biggest asset. But she can score when she needs to score. She is like a little point guard."

Key moment: The team was brought together by a tragedy experienced by one of its members. The Bears varsity lacrosse team held a special scrimmage game with the Bears junior varsity team at the end of the season. Freshman Heather Defoe, who plays on the junior varsity squad, was bumped up to varsity for one game so she could play in front of her dad, Carl Defoe, who taught her how to play lacrosse. Carl Defoe, dying of lung cancer, watched his daughter from a wheelchair parked in the stands. Heather scored three goals. Her father, who was on his fifth round of chemotherapy, said, "I feel lucky" when asked how it was to see his daughter play. The cancer had traveled to his brain and spinal cord and he said doctors had only given him weeks to live. He said he's only had one dream: To see Heather play in a varsity lacrosse game. Carl Defoe, 50, died two months later, after that game. Heather said she will keep playing lacrosse and fight hard for a spot on the varsity squad next year. "I am still going to play because I know he's going to be watching from the front row," she said.

Quote about the game from Coach Efland: "The school's lacrosse community has always been a close-knit community and this has certainly brought us even closer together. What is surprising is how many people outside the lacrosse community have read about what happened and have shown their support as well. I have received emails from basketball, football and wrestling coaches, as well as parents and sports fans from around the country showing their support for the Defoe family and thanking the school for what they did. Not many players and parents of upperclassmen knew Heather or her family prior to finding out about their struggle but have immediately adopted Heather into our lacrosse family."