Sports Coverage

- Student Activity: Sports Identity
- Post Reprint: “Capitals win Stanley Cup, Washington’s first major sports championship since 1992”
- Post Reprint: “The Mystics party after the WNBA championship, but for many it’s right back to work overseas”
- Student Activity: Loss, Caps and Options
- Student Activity: Think Like a Reporter | Beyond the Sports Pages
- Post Reprint: “Can we drop all the woman stuff and make it just about the Mystics’ playing?”
Reporters are to remain fair and balanced in their gathering of facts and figures, relating of interviews and eyewitness accounts, and structuring the story. This is more challenging in sports writing. How do reporters on the home team beat keep from being fans when relating the losses, wins and reasons for both and when covering the opposing team?

D.C.’s Capitals, Mystics and Nationals were champions who received extra pages and special coverage, including commemorative sections. This did not stop other professional, collegiate and high school teams from being reported. Beat reporters continued writing articles on mens and womens teams, news briefs highlighted games and matches, and scoreboards maintained the stats.

Use “Sports Identity,” a survey of The Washington Post SPORTS pages and a review of your student media sports coverage, to brainstorm, to suggest and to launch deeper and fuller reporting by your student media. Incorporate mathematics, business and personal finance into your classroom through caps and merchandising, caps and club options, contractual impact of personal and team standings, and athletes’ off-season plans.

Remember to include and be fair to opposing teams. Let the statistics inform reporting as well as interviews from different perspectives. Give all athletes and teams opportunity to receive accurate and balanced sports coverage.
Sports Identity

Newspapers cover sports. Some have designated sections with pages of news and feature articles, photographs and captions, and scoreboards. Others have pages in daily or weekly issues, easily identified as sports. When the local teams win championships special coverage (including whole sections) often takes place.

Use your own paper to respond to the following.

In The Washington Post

Locate the SPORTS section of The Washington Post in print or e-Replica and online editions.

1. Begin by reading the first page.
   A. What are the above-the-fold (online: top of the page) stories?
   B. Are they the same stories in print and online? If not, what may be a factor?
   C. Are any of the stories follow-up stories? If yes, what does this article add to the news?
   D. What stories will be found on inside pages?
   E. What additional information is given on the front page of the SPORTS section?

2. Can you distinguish news from feature stories before reading the article?
   A. In the print editions, news stories begin at the left margin. Feature stories are centered in their column. What other clues are there for opinion pieces in print?
   B. What words are used online to alert readers to opinion or feature stories?

3. Who are the people who are reporting on sports?
   A. Who are the columnists and which sport does each cover?
   B. Are reporters assigned beats? Locate three professional sports. Who covers them?
   C. Select a collegiate sport that is in season. In what ways is it covered in The Post?
   D. Give examples of area high school teams that are covered.

4. Find examples of each of the following in the SPORTS section. Record the headline, date and page reference.
   Write a one-sentence summary of the article.
   A. Team news story
   B. Team feature story
   C. Athlete’s personal story
   D. Sports column
   E. Coverage of a sport other than football, soccer and baseball

5. Locate the Scoreboard page(s).
   A. How many sports are included in the scoreboard?
   B. Which high school sports and teams are included? What might influence their selection to be in the print edition?
SPORTS IDENTITY | continued

In Your Student Media
Sports are seasonal. Review past issues of the school newspaper, student-run website and broadcasts. Now you are ready to respond to these questions.

1. Note the three seasons of league play. Under each season, list the teams that play.
   A. After reviewing past issues and reviewing broadcasts, have all the teams that you have listed received some coverage?
   B. Do some teams receive more column inches or on-air time than others? If yes, which ones and why?
   C. Have any of the teams been included only in scoreboards with no further coverage?

2. In addition to news stories, does your student media include feature stories and informational graphics? Find an example of each of the following.
   If you cannot find examples, brainstorm who and what your media could cover to improve sports coverage.
   A. Athlete, coach and support staff profiles
   B. History of the team through informational graphics
   C. Rivalries now and in the past — selecting key teams your school will play
   D. Interviews and Q&A with current and past athletes
   E. Other:

3. Read the chart titled “Redskins’ schedule.” Use it as a model to create a similar chart for one of your school’s teams. If you have a student media online presence, how might this chart be a weekly update to draw “eyes” to your coverage? Might such a chart bring attention to a team that has low student attendance?

4. Locate the Scoreboard page(s).
   A. How many sports are included in the scoreboard?
   B. Are all mens and womens teams included? If not, why do you think some are omitted?

5. Write a news or feature article about one of the sports teams or student athletes in your school. Include a chart to summarize information about the team or athlete.
Washington Capitals

Capitals win Stanley Cup, Washington’s first major sports championship since 1992

BY ISABELLE KHURSHUDYAN,
ROMAN STUBBS, JESSE DOUGHERTY,
SCOTT ALLEN, NEIL GREENBERG
AND DAN STEINBERG

Originally Published June 8, 2018

Stanley Cup finals: Game 5
Washington Capitals 4,
Vegas Golden Knights 3
Series: Capitals win, 4-1

This win was worth the wait

BY ISABELLE KHURSHUDYAN

LAS VEGAS — Alex Ovechkin tossed off his helmet and gloves early, with his Washington Capitals less than a second away from winning the Stanley Cup. One last faceoff remained. The puck dropped, the clock stopped for good, and Ovechkin looked skyward — lifting his arms, running his fingers through his gray hair, perhaps disbelieving that a moment he seemed destined for had finally arrived 13 seasons into his NHL career.

The fans in the streets of Washington and those here in T-Mobile Arena did the same. They had been patient, too, waiting 44 years for the Capitals to be crowned Stanley Cup champions after they defeated the Vegas Golden Knights in five games with Thursday’s 4-3 win. Ovechkin skated to the glass and blew kisses to the crowd in appreciation.

Then Ovechkin turned to each of his teammates, screaming as he was asked by NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman to lift the Stanley Cup for the first time. He screamed again when he touched it. He kept screaming when he raised it overhead.

The Capitals had been stained with the loser label since 1974-75, when the expansion team won just eight games, still the NHL’s worst campaign. Ovechkin’s arrival in 2004, drafted first overall, eventually brought more regular season success, and with a young superstar core of him and center Nicklas Backstrom, a first championship felt inevitable. Ovechkin has admitted that he treated it as such at times, perhaps taking for granted how hard it can be to win. That lesson was learned with repeated playoff disappointments: Nine trips to the postseason ended short of the conference finals. Ovechkin’s leadership and commitment were questioned. It was fair to question whether Washington’s talented foundation was damaged —
and whether this year was its last chance to prove it deserved to stay together.

It was fitting that the Capitals won their first Stanley Cup with Backstrom setting up an Ovechkin power-play goal. They have complemented each other for a decade, the flashy goal scorer in Ovechkin (named the Conn Smythe winner as playoff MVP) and the subtle and skilled setup man in Backstrom. They played on separate lines this postseason after years side by side, but they acknowledged each other at each step of this journey. Backstrom had to miss Washington’s clinching Game 6 win against Pittsburgh in the second round because of a right hand injury, but after the Capitals got past the Penguins for their first trip to the Eastern Conference finals in 20 years, Ovechkin hugged Backstrom in the dressing room. They shared another embrace on the ice when Washington won Game 7 against Tampa Bay in the conference final.

On Thursday night, after Ovechkin hoisted and kissed the Stanley Cup, he passed it to Backstrom, an acknowledgment of their long partnership.

This season started with the same Stanley Cup dreams, but perhaps the Capitals were the only ones who considered them realistic.

“We’re not going to be suck this year,” Ovechkin said on the first day of training camp. Washington couldn’t get past the second round with rosters that won the Presidents’ Trophy for the league’s best regular season title in back-to-back seasons, and after salary cap constraints coupled with the expansion draft caused significant roster turnover, there was little optimism that this would be the Capitals’ year.

Veterans were replaced with rookies and fringe NHLers. Winger Jakub Vrana, the team’s 2014 first-round pick, was counted on to produce offensively in his first full season. He endured goal droughts that lasted months, and he was a healthy scratch at the start of the playoffs. But on Thursday night, he scored the first goal of the game on a breakaway. Veteran Capitals have said the infusion of youth was a big reason for the team’s success; the youngsters didn’t know playoff heartbreak, playing without the burden of the organization’s tortured history.

The same could be said for the team’s unheralded free agent
additions. At 25, Devante Smith-Pelly had his contract bought out by the New Jersey Devils, and he signed with Washington for the league minimum. It wasn’t clear whether he would even make the team out of training camp, but after Smith-Pelly scored seven goals during the regular season, he matched that total in the playoffs. His seventh goal and third in as many games came with 10:08 left in regulation Thursday, tying the score at 3.

Consider that this improbable run probably wouldn’t have lasted past the team’s first-round series had a puck not bounced off the thigh of Columbus Blue Jackets defenseman Zach Werenski and then deflected off Capitals center Lars Eller in double overtime of Game 3, a wacky bounce that lifted Washington to its first playoff win. He secured the Capitals’ last playoff win, too, recognizing that a puck had squeezed through Vegas goaltender Marc-Andre Fleury. Eller got his stick behind Fleury and swatted the puck into the net, the decisive goal with 7:37 remaining that lifted Washington to a 4-3 lead.

The Capitals were at a low when this season started. Their coach didn’t have a contract, and had Washington slipped into a significant losing streak, Barry Trotz might have been fired midseason. But for all of Washington’s bumps throughout the season — and there were definitely more bumps this year — the team was able to consistently pick itself back up.

The first 20 games had been an exercise in that, getting over the grief from another devastating early playoff exit.

“If you look at our playoff records and how we’ve been, it can’t get any worse,” Backstrom said in late March.

With the puck iced and less than a second left, Ovechkin took off his helmet, anticipating the celebration that was to come. He started jumping. On the ice, he found Backstrom, pulling him into a long embrace as they screamed in each other’s face. It can’t get any better. The first 20 games had been an exercise in that, getting over the grief from another devastating early playoff exit.

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The Mystics party after the WNBA championship, but for many it’s right back to work overseas

BY CANDACE BUCKNER

• Originally Published October 11, 2019

The locker room reeked of sweat, glee and sparkling wine. Mostly sparkling wine. The La Marca prosecco, the Washington Mystics’ drink of choice Thursday night during the postgame celebration of the franchise’s first WNBA championship, that was spilled all over the plastic-lined carpet made Myisha Hines-Allen’s steps wobbly.

“Moonwalk!” she shouted into a cellphone camera, demonstrating how slippery her D.C. workplace had become after teammates showered the room with alcohol.

Soon, though, the championship buzz will wear off and Hines-Allen and several Mystics teammates will have to sober up and march forward to new jobs.

It’s the nature of the WNBA. Unlike other sports in which winning the final game of the year means getting to party all offseason (see: the 2018 Washington Capitals), many professional women’s basketball players juggle year-round work. According to the team, seven Mystics players have upcoming commitments to play for international teams.

“At least half of them,” Mystics General-Manager Coach Mike Thibault said of his roster. “Some will be leaving in the next couple days.”

That’s why their victory rally was held Friday at Entertainment and Sports Arena, just hours after the clinching Game 5 victory, and why a parade will have to wait till spring.

“Today is an exciting and historic day for the Mystics family, and we wanted to celebrate as a team with our fans prior to everyone heading in different directions for the offseason,” Thibault said in a statement.

Hines-Allen had barely removed her Oakley ski goggles, worn to protect vulnerable retinas from the spritz of Italian wine, before thinking about her next gig.

“I’m going to South Korea,” she responded when asked about the near future. “They couldn’t talk to me until the season officially ended, so I’ll probably be getting a text soon. But hopefully I have some time, like two weeks, before I have to go over there.”

Other Mystics will scatter elsewhere across the globe. Finals MVP Emma Meesseman will soon hop a transatlantic flight to Russia. Guard Natasha Cloud and forward Aerial Powers are heading to China. Guard Ariel Atkins goes to Australia, rookie guard Kim Mestdagh to...
France and guard Shatori Walker-Kimbrough to Hungary.

Last fall while she was in Russia, Hines-Allen couldn’t stop thinking about the way the 2018 WNBA season had ended. The Mystics were swept in three games, and that sour feeling stayed with players who longed to return and, as their 2019 motto suggested, run it back.

“When you’re overseas, it’s like you want to get back to the States,” Hines-Allen said. “And I mean this is what we play for, to win a WNBA championship. First you dream about playing in the WNBA, and next it’s actually winning a championship. And winning in my second year, it’s amazing.”

Even Thibault has a busy offseason lined up but with stateside travel.

This month, he will welcome a daughter-in-law to the family when Eric, his son and assistant coach, gets married. The coach also plans to do some television work with ESPN, as well as catch a few University of Minnesota games — daughter Carly is an assistant for the women’s team — and travel to University of Wisconsin River Falls to watch his son-in-law, Blake DuDonis, coach the Division III school’s women. Throw in Mystics offseason duties such as scouting for the next draft pick, and Thibault’s schedule will remain busy.

Still, for his players who have to immerse themselves in a new team and a new culture soon, Thibault believes there are worse things than playing the sport you love all year long.

“It’s hard when you play year-round to make a living, but what I always tell people in this game: It beats working, and it beats not working,” Thibault said. “There are a lot of people who go to regular jobs every day, and they work year-round no matter what. A lot of our players work year-round, but they’re playing a kids’ game, and they’re getting paid for it, and they get to do something they get joy in every day. They’re not sitting behind a desk. So even though there’s hardships, it beats the real world sometimes.”

Several other Mystics will put away their red jerseys but remain close to D.C. Veteran guard Kristi Toliver will resume her role as a player development coach for the Washington Wizards, and she will take on more responsibilities in her second season. Wizards General Manager Tommy Sheppard said Toliver will be in charge of scouting multiple opponents and presenting reports to the team, a common role for assistant coaches.

“Kristi is going to plug in a lot of spots,” Sheppard said during the WNBA Finals. “Whenever. We’ll take her when she’s got a ring.”

Elena Delle Donne, too, will not travel far away. Since she arrived in Washington via a trade in February 2017, Delle Donne has not played overseas, choosing instead to remain near family and prepare her mind and body for the next WNBA season. She also has acted as a basketball ambassador for Monumental Sports & Entertainment, showing up at Wizards games.

But for several Mystics, enjoying their well-earned championship while still in Washington will last for only so long. The buckets of prosecco will empty, and the party will soon end. It’ll be time to return to work.

“We’re going to remember this season because we were around such incredible people and we absolutely adore being together,” Delle Donne said. “So I’m kind of sad, like the season is about to be over. I’m going to miss everybody. But my goodness, we sure ended this on a high note.”
Loss, Caps and Options

Sports stories cover losing seasons as well as winning ones. They cover the business side as well as the personal side. They cover “rebuilding years” and “standoffs.” They may also serve as models for composition.

Locksley sees a foundation, not a failure, in his first season

By Emily Giambalvo
November 2, 2019

The opportunities for the Maryland Terrapins to leave Coach Michael Locksley’s first season with tangible markers of success have dwindled. The Terps have won only one game since mid-September, and reaching bowl eligibility would require a remarkable November surge. The team’s only conference victory came against Rutgers. The Terps (3-5, 1-4 Big Ten) have sunk into a three-game losing streak entering Saturday’s game against No. 14 Michigan. The chance to match, let alone improve upon, last year’s 5-7 record appears improbable.

Penn State demolished Maryland in embarrassing fashion; teams such as Michigan and No. 3 Ohio State could do the same this month. The Terps couldn’t keep pace with Purdue and Minnesota. When it had the chance to go ahead late in close games against Temple and Indiana, Maryland faltered.

That’s where Maryland stands as the season moves into its final month, but from Locksley’s perspective, this is Year 1 in the far-reaching vision for what he wants this program to become.

“We won’t be result-oriented,” Locksley said. “Nobody said that this was going to be easy. And taking the next step as a program to me, when we think about it, I mean, from where we were this time last year to now, the fact that we have expectations, the fact that we’re in this thing, are 3-5 at this point in our season and we still have some opportunities.”

This time a year ago, the board of regents met multiple times, discussing the professional fate of coach D.J. Durkin in the wake of troubling allegations of cultural issues within the program after the death of offensive lineman Jordan McNair from heatstroke. The focus, understandably, had veered far from football itself. Some players stood up against their school’s administration when the university briefly reinstated Durkin. The team waited in limbo with interim coach Matt Canada leading the charge. So even though the game results have slipped, the program has found stability in this new era, and attention has drifted back to the on-field performances. … [335 words]

Strasburg opts out of his Nats contract

By Jesse Dougherty
November 3, 2019

Just hours after the Washington Nationals celebrated their World Series title with a parade, their offseason picked up with a handful of moves Saturday night.

At the center of them was starter Stephen Strasburg, their World Series MVP, who opted out of his contract and will test free agency, according to a person with knowledge of the situation. Strasburg could still renegotiate a deal to remain with the Nationals. But, either way, this was the first domino to fall for a team that will look different next season.

Not even champions can sidestep the reality of baseball's offseason.

All-star third baseman Anthony Rendon, a National League MVP candidate, is a free agent, and negotiations are “sort of at square one,” according to a person with knowledge of them, though the Nationals remain committed to bringing him back. Longtime face of the franchise Ryan Zimmerman has an $18 million team option for 2020 that won’t be picked up, but both sides remain open to a cheaper short-term deal.

The Nationals will not exercise a 2020 club option on catcher Yan Gomes, according to a person with knowledge of the situation, but Gomes remains interested in returning if the numbers work out. Gomes’s option was for $9 million. Not surprisingly, the Nationals did exercise 2020 options for left-handed reliever Sean Doolittle ($6.5 million) and right fielder Adam Eaton ($9.5 million).

Rendon officially became a free agent Thursday morning, along with postseason star Howie Kendrick, Game 7 closer Daniel Hudson, “Baby Shark” fan favorite Gerardo Parra, second basemen Asdrúbal Cabrera and Brian Dozier, plus pitchers Fernando Rodney, Jeremy Hellickson and Jonny Venters. Strasburg and Gomes lengthened that list by Saturday night. Those close to Strasburg believe he would like to stay in Washington, where he moved his family last offseason and has been since the Nationals drafted him with the first pick in 2009. But the opt-out is also perfectly timed to his career arc. … [322 words]

FOR MOST OF THE PAST DECADE, POWER HAS LIVED IN THE FAR LEFT CORNER OF THE REDSKINS’ LOCKER ROOM. THIS IS WHERE TRENT WILLIAMS, THE TEAM’S STAR LEFT TACKLE, HAS DRESSED, SPRAWLING IN A CHAIR, HIS BACK RESTING AGAINST THE EDGES OF HIS LOCKER STALL, HIS EXPRESSION SERENE, EYES SEEING EVERYTHING.

“APPROACHING HIM WAS LIKE HAVING AN AUDIENCE WITH A KING,” ONE TEAMMATE SAID.

YET WILLIAMS WAS NOT AS INTIMIDATING AS HE APPEARED. THE CHAIRS ON EITHER SIDE OF HIM WERE OPEN TO ANYONE WHO WANTED TO SIT DOWN AND TALK ABOUT ANYTHING THAT WOULD KEEP HIS INTEREST. PLAYERS HAVE LONG DESCRIBED HIM AS ONE OF THE KINDEST MEN THEY KNEW IN FOOTBALL, SOMEONE WHO WOULD PICK UP TABS AND OFFER ADVICE.

BECAUSE OF THIS, WILLIAMS BECAME THE TEAM’S MOST REVERED PLAYER, RESPECTED AS MUCH FOR HIS BENEFICENCE AS FOR THE SEVEN STRAIGHT PRO BOWLS TO WHICH HE WAS NAMED AND THE CAREER THAT HAS BEEN ON A TRAJECTORY FOR THE HALL OF FAME. ALL OF WHICH MAKES THE CURRENT SITUATION BETWEEN THE 31-YEAR-OLD LINEMAN AND THE REDSKINS EXTREMELY COMPLICATED.

THE STANDOFF BETWEEN THE FRONT OFFICE AND ITS BEST PLAYER LOOMS OVER EVERYTHING ELSE GOING ON AROUND THE TEAM. WASHINGTON’S SEASON APPEARS HEADED TO A DISASTROUS END AFTER A 1-7 BEGINNING, FIRST-ROUND DRAFT PICK DWAYNE HASKINS IS SET TO MAKE HIS FIRST START SUNDAY AT BUFFALO, AND ALL OF THAT IS OVERSHADOWED BY WILLIAMS’ FORCED RETURN FROM A FIVE-MONTH HOLDOUT.

A SILENT STRUGGLE IS ERUPTING INTO AN ALL-OUT WAR, WITH WILLIAMS PUBLICLY ALLEGING REDSKINS DOCTORS IGNORED A GROWTH ON HIS HEAD FOR YEARS THAT WAS EVENTUALLY DIAGNOSED AS A RARE FORM OF CANCER, DERMATOIBLEMOSARCOMA PROTUBERANS (DFSP), THAT NONETHELESS HAS A 10-YEAR SURVIVAL RATE OF 99 PERCENT. THE REDSKINS ARE FIGHTING BACK BY ASKING A JOINT COMMITTEE OF NFL AND THE NFL PLAYERS ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVES TO EXAMINE WILLIAMS’ MEDICAL RECORDS.

“THERE’S NO TRUST THERE,” WILLIAMS SAID THURSDAY OF HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ORGANIZATION. … [322 WORDS]

Think Like a Reporter  | Beyond the Sports Pages

The sports section editor approaches you. She wants more coverage of the season than the game stories and scoreboards you always publish. She wants more than a profile of players of the week or coach of the season. What can you do to think like a reporter who goes beyond the sports pages in coverage of sports?

The Past | Historic Perspective

John Kelly’s Washington column appears in the METRO section. Kelly covers the metropolitan area’s current stories; provides local color through looking at art and architecture, curiosities and culture; and answers readers’ questions that often require his delving into The Post archives or interviewing long-time citizens.

As the World Series games approached, it was natural for Kelly to think about the history of baseball in D.C. Read and discuss “For black baseball fans, Griffith Stadium offered a ‘separate but equal experience.’”

- What does the term “separate but equal” mean? What is its origins in U.S. history?
- What do you know of the Negro League after reading this article? What else would you like to know about it?
- Summarize the history of the Homestead Grays, Griffith Stadium and Clark Griffith’s business practices.
- Look at the photograph from the Library of Congress collection. What are potential stories that this photograph may be used to illustrate?
- Read the caption. What are the 5Ws and H that are provided?
- News articles are written with the cut-off test in mind. What is this practice?
- The last four paragraphs of John Kelly’s column provide essential perspective that casts light on the past, present and potential future of baseball in D.C. Summarize and comment on the point Kelly makes in the conclusion of his column.

Ask yourself what you know about the history of your school’s playing fields and stadiums. Reporter David Nakamura did just that with the Washington Nationals’ baseball stadium. He provided a different perspective on the Nationals Park and area surrounding it. His “To host a World Series again, it took a team of the evicted” takes readers back to 2005 when D.C. government leaders invoked eminent domain and issued promises. Read and discuss the article. Begin with the following questions.

- What research did he do to ground the article?
- Whom did he interview to give the human perspective?
- In what ways is this an economics and business story as much as a sports story?
- What and who would you emphasize if this was a story about gentrification?

Now go back to those first questions. What do you know about the history of your school’s sports teams and athletes? What do you know about the history of the land upon which your school is built? For whom are facilities named? Has your team name or mascot changed over the years?
An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

The Present | **Features to Add Depth and Heart**

What activities are being put in place as your school heads to regional and state championships? Win or lose what have athletic boosters, parents, cheerleaders and other planned to celebrate?

- If a pep rally, what makes this one different than others?
- What items have been designed to promote the competitions and the athletes?
- Are special caps, T-shirts and other memorabilia on sale?
- Who are the behind-the-scenes people who should get some attention?

*The Post’s* religion reporter, Michelle Boorstein did just that in a METRO section article on October 26. Who knew that the Nationals has a chaplain? Read “‘Bless these bats’” to learn more about the background of the chaplain and the types of service he provides.

Read through *The Washington Post* for stories that go beyond game expectations, recap and statistics, and profiles of players and coaches. Select one and summarize its topic and the reporter’s approach. How might you use this article as a model to localize for your school and community?

The Future | **You Are Not Fortune Tellers**

*The Post’s* longtime horse racing beat reporter Andrew Beyer created what is known in that industry as the Beyer Speed Figures. Picking horses had been a guessing game, looking at the breeding that ran in the blood of the four-footed athletes. Beyer wrote about racing for more than 40 years, including writing *Picking Winners* in 1975 that explained his rating system. Even he could not pick winners of every race.

Reporters can look at trends such as virtual training and concussion research, new faces, rule changes and other aspects of a sport to suggest the future of a sport.

What decisions by coaches, athletic leagues and sports equipment producers may influence your school’s athletes?

Timely Reporting | **Brainstorm, Research, Interviews and Organize**

All three — past, present and future — may work together to inform readers and make those involved in the topic or issue more knowledgeable.

*Post* reporter Roman Stubbs in November 2019 wrote about the formation of the Friends of Middlebury Flag Football, a coalition of college, high school and youth football stakeholders. “In Vermont, a new model aimed to help save football” begins:

One night 12 summers ago, the seven men took their seats on the white porch of an 1870s Victorian home in Middlebury, Vt., ready to talk about how they were going to save football.

In this picturesque small New England town, the sport was struggling. Youth participation numbers, long the key to replenishing the local high school team, were shrinking. So Peter Brakeley, a longtime coach in this progressive community, summoned a small group of people to his home.

“We have to do something,” Brakeley recalls saying to begin the meeting, and before the sun went down that evening, over cookies and iced tea, they hatched a plan to promote the game differently for kids. They wrote a three-word mission statement on a notepad: “Safety, Sportsmanship, Fun.” Then they rewrote their rule book: Youth games would last no more than an hour; playoffs and championships would not exist, and there would be absolutely no tackling to the ground.
1. Annotate the first four paragraphs.
   a. Who (underline), What (two underscores), Where (circle), When (box)
   b. The “past” is the reason for meeting. Why are they meeting?
   c. How are they going to do it?
   d. Where is a “future” indicated or implied?

2. Read the complete article that was published on November 7, 2019, in the print/e-Replica issues.
   [https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/2019/11/06/small-vermont-towns-plan-save-youth-football-has-become-model-state/]
   What is the current situation in sports?

3. Do the three concepts — safety, sportsmanship and fun — relate to athletes and athletic programs in your school? Explain.

4. Brainstorm ideas for coverage of women’s sports. You may wish to read John Kelly’s “All hyped over D.C.’s 1st World Series” that tells of Elsie Tydings who bought the first ticket to the 1924 World Series opener between Washington Senators and New York Giants. Ideas that might apply to your school’s program may include:
   a. Female athletes who hold individual records
   b. The first women’s sports teams at your school
   c. The first female coach(es)
   d. Former female athletes who did well on collegiate teams
   e. Other:
   f. Other:

5. Brainstorm beyond-the-sports-page article ideas to cover athletes, teams, coaches, facilities and programs.
   a.
   b.
   c.

Select one of the ideas. Who would you interview and what facts and data do you need?
Can we drop all the woman stuff and make it just about the Mystics’ playing?

By Petula Dvorak
Columnist

The story of the Washington Mystics’ championship should be about nothing more than a team of fierce ballers who simply out-balled everyone else.

They made history, winning the WNBA title for the first time in the franchise’s 22 seasons, beating the Connecticut Sun, 89-78, in the fifth and final game of the WNBA Finals on Thursday night.

And, like any other championship team, it was that delicious combination of coaching, chemistry and insane work ethic that gave them the crackling electricity you can feel from a team that’s winning and winning.

Here’s what their championship basketball win story should not be about:

We shouldn’t have to talk about the long-awaited arena they finally got after decades of sharing the downtown stage with the NBA Wizards or vagabonding around in college gyms.

We shouldn’t be smirking just a little when we mention that this arena stands on the grounds of the old St. Elizabeths Hospital, once the nation’s largest psychiatric facility and in the city’s most impoverished, underemployed, violent and neglected ward.

We shouldn’t be congratulating them for their genuine bonding with their Ward 8 neighborhood and fan base, for being on the bow-wave of a new age of investment and development in the part of the city that usually doesn’t get this kind of attention. We won’t dare call it maternal.

And do we need to remind D.C. that the Mystics are part of the narrative that makes the city a sports town? To stop pining away for the football team and the baseball boys?

And maybe we shouldn’t have to use this as a time to mention the consistent and staggering pay gap in women’s professional sports.

The WNBA players pay is disgraceful. The highest-paid player in the league, Phoenix’s DeWanna Bonner, makes just $127,500 a year, according to High Post Hoops.

Mystics star and league MVP Elena Delle Donne spoke out last year about the pay disparities, when she was making $107,000 and...
was tired of the trope that women’s sports can’t hold fans.

She began speaking out “because I want it to be better for the next generation coming through,” she told the Philadelphia Inquirer’s Ben Pope. “Knowing how hard we all work and how talented we all are, and just not getting the props and the pay that we deserve.”

And no, it’s not only about ticket sales. It’s about the value the league places on these players. NBA players get 50 percent of league revenue, while the WNBA players get just 20 percent, according to Forbes.

Do we also have to use a championship win to extol the players’ bravery and their honest, social activism? The out-and-proud, same-sex marriage of Delle Donne. The Athletes + Activism events that explore social justice issues. The special section for victims of gun violence and the backpacks for neighborhood children organized by point guard Natasha Cloud.

And just because they’re female, do we have to linger on the raw pioneer-woman persistence and pain they muscle through? The back problems that sidelined Delle Donne and Ariel Atkins just days ago seemed like a memory as they dominated the court Thursday night. How is it possible that the towering Goddess statue come to life, Delle Donne, struggles with chronic Lyme disease?

There are female champions every year in the WNBA, so do we still have to dwell on the importance of seeing a woman hoisting a trophy above her head in a flurry of confetti as a common sight? Do those girls really need to see one to be one, or is it just okay that men are the usual default in that victory montage?

Should we be indignant that the Mystics’ city celebration is an afternoon rally at their Wed 8 arena, rather than the citywide, Viking victory parade the Caps got? Should we be extra upset that the quickie rally is all they could do because most of the national champions have to rush off for their second jobs in other leagues?

When women win the same way men win, we tend to give it all a greater mission, to make it a movement and a moment, to put it all in some greater, historical context. Can’t they just be the best ballers that day?

Yes and no.

The fact is, these women aren’t making the NBA minimum of over $800,000 a year; they can’t really take the summer off; and their games aren’t broadcast during prime time. Heck, their historic win wasn’t even on the top of The Washington Post’s home page the morning after. Their win is still different. Their hills remain steeper. Their barricades are still higher.

True equality will happen when their win is just a win.

But for now, the women of the Washington Mystics will have to be celebrated for being social justice warriors, neighborhood advocates and brave individualists who also happen to the best damn ballers in the country.