

INSIDE JOURNALISM

Volume 1, Issue 7

Shirley, One of the Best

**The Extraordinary
Tale of a Caddy
Who Turned a Golf
Course Break Into a
Reporting Career
And Became One
Of the Champions
Of Sports Journalism.
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Athletes

Shirley Povich files a sports story for the Post in the 1940s. After working for the paper 75 years, he filed his last story, a column, the day before he died in 1999.



An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

The News

KidsPost Article: "Following the Bouncing Ball"

The INSIDE Journalism curriculum guide provides information and resources that can be used on many grade levels and in many subject areas. Here are a few suggestions for using the material in this guide.

Think About Sports

What are the favorite sports, sports teams and athletes of your students? What makes them favorites?

Many say that the front page, the Sports section and comics are the first parts of a newspaper that is read. Ask students which part of the newspaper is the best, after KidsPost. Do they read the Sports section? What parts of the sports coverage do they like? Photographs, articles, box scores? Do they read the high school coverage?

After the Civil War, sportswriting began to be recognized as its own strong presence in American newspapers. In the early 20th century, Grantland Rice, Shirley Povich and Red Smith brought observation, facts and their own style to establish the genre firmly.

Read

Steve Wyche, the sports reporter for The Washington Post who covers the Washington Wizards, tells about his job. Read "Following the Bouncing Ball" and "Tracking Jordan."

Meet the Sports Editor

Read "Meet the Sports Editor" found in this guide. Cindy Boren answers our questions about her job and how she works with sports reporters. Sports is one of six major departments of the news staff responsible for The Post's

daily coverage. Sports coverage, found in the D section, includes the work of reporters, editors and eight columnists.

Discuss

After reading the KidsPost article and the reproducible in this guide, discuss these questions.

1. Who has the Wizards beat for The Washington Post? Where does he sit during a Wizards game?
2. What is the job of the sports reporter? Do Wyche and Boren agree on the role of the sports reporter and coverage of the home team?
3. Would a sports reporter interview the trainer and the players who sit on the bench most of a game? Why?
4. What are some benefits of being a sports reporter?
5. What are the drawbacks of being a sports reporter?
6. What is the job of the sports editor? How does the job of sports editor differ from being a sports reporter?
7. Who is responsible for knowing the statistics? What are sources for getting stats?
8. What do you learn about Michael Jordan from Wyche?
9. Who makes the final decisions about what gets on the printed sports pages of The Post?

How to Write a Sports Article

The best way to learn about sports reporting is to write. The

In the Know

Balance: Fairly presenting accurate and pertinent information about all parties involved

Beat: Area of specialty to which a reporter is assigned; in sports reporting, this may be basketball or more specific, the Wizards. Reporters develop sources, meet those involved and know all there is to know about their beats.

Collective noun: Nouns that signify groups of people, such as "team" and "crew"

Jargon: Terms and idioms of a particular group; easy communication to those in the group, but confusion to those outside the group

Score: Numerical record of a competitive event; points made by each competitor or side, either final or at a given stage

Score box: Collection of the event's scores or the team's record to date, usually enclosed by rule lines or in a spot color box

Sports editor: Person who helps develop sports coverage and then edits stories for accuracy in reporting

Sportsmanship: Conduct and attitude considered as befitting participants in sports, especially fair play, courtesy, striving spirit and grace in losing

Statistics: Numerical data



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sports story occurs before, during and after the game. Reporters try to capture the excitement, the pauses and the disappointments of the game. What would they write about the game in a letter to their best friends? Give students “How to Write a Sports Story.”

Use Numbers in Sports Articles

Give students “Sportswriting by the Numbers.” Read articles in the Sports section and review box score examples to show students how these ideas apply in actual articles. Divide your class into the number of athletic teams, boys and girls, in your school. Each group is assigned a different team. Each group is to collect the win-loss record so far this year, including teams played and a highlight of plays from three significant games. You may ask them to record the high scorer and record holders, depending on the sport. For example, most rebounds, longest jump, most goals scored, fastest 440-meter relay.

You may wish to make this a long-term activity, asking students to compile results every week for the whole season. At the end of the season, students will write a season wrap-up article as well as a scoreboard and season highlights.

Write a Sports Article

On one of those warm school days when students are eager to be outside, ask them to become sports reporters. View a video of a portion of a game—they may forget about wanting to be outside. Ideally, you can provide a fact sheet about the teams to review before viewing begins. You may also have students who can tell about the teams. Pair

students to compare the notes they have taken about the action that took place.

- Do they agree on the highlights of the segment?
- Did they record the # or identity of the players involved?
- Do they have questions that other classmates may be able to answer?

Ask each student to write a paragraph for an article on the game. Get into groups to share paragraphs. Select one to share with the class.

A variation: If you have enough monitors, you could divide students into four groups, each one getting a different quarter to view. Do the activity as outlined above. When the paragraph from each group is shared aloud, present in first-to-fourth-quarter order. They now know the game’s key plays and the result. Now have the class write a lede for the article.

You could use The Post’s Scoreboard and game article if you record a game that The Post covered. Compare the article written by the students with the one written by The Post reporter.

Use the activity as a warm-up to assigning students a game to cover. If your school has several teams competing, allow students to select which game and team to cover.

Learn from the Great

Before there was Tony Kornheiser, Michael Wilbon or Sally Jenkins, there was Shirley Povich. “Who Was Shirley Povich?” and “A Changing Community, A Changing Role” both provide a look at the reporting of Povich.

You may also wish to encourage students to read the works of the

Covering All Sports

On the Web

➤ <http://www.highschooljournalism.org/teachers/tipssportsrow1.htm>

10 Tips for Improving Scholastic Newspaper Sportswriting

Steve Row, Journalism Education Coordinator, Richmond Newspapers, Inc., provides a quick tips list with examples.

➤ <http://www.highschooljournalism.org/teachers/tipssportsrow2.htm>

10 Tips for Improving Scholastic Newspaper Sports Pages

More suggestions from Steve Row to keep your sports coverage from becoming a cheering section.

➤ <http://www.highschooljournalism.org/teachers/tipssportsrow3.htm>

40 Sports Feature Ideas

Have you asked your students to write a sports feature and received a blank stare? Use these ideas to generate more feature ideas or to make them specific to your school.

➤ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/sports/highschools/>

Post High School Sports

Read sports news from public and private schools in the D.C. Metropolitan area. Also find features and columns that relate to high school athletics. (See if you agree with Tony Kornheiser on Kwame Brown and LeBron James or Sally Jenkins on James and the Ohio high school commissioner.) Check out the All-Met team selections (including those archived since 1990 by sport), league index (links to Post coverage of your school) and stat central for up-to-date numbers on passes, rebounds and scores. Polls will also give you something to debate.



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National Sportscasters and Sportswriters Association Sportswriter of the Year. Red Smith, NY Herald-Tribune, was the first to receive the recognition (1959-1962, 1965). Other multiple winners have been Jim Murray, LA Times (14 times), Sports Illustrated's Rick Reilly (7) and Frank Deford (6).

Consider Freedom of Speech and Athletes

Younger students should be given "Being a Good Sport." You might quote Grantland Rice, one of the early great sports writers: "For when the One Great Scorer comes to mark against your name, He writes—not that you won or lost—but how you played the Game."

Read "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit Of Nothingness" by Sally Jenkins. Discuss the position she takes in her column. Either give students the You and Your Rights background paper, "The Athlete as Role Model: Sportsmanship and the Extent to Which Athletes Must Speak" or use it for your information to generate discussion.

After spending one class period reading the Jenkins' article and discussing the background of this topic to your class, hand out the chart as a homework assignment. Use the questions to discuss the assignment during the second class period. The answer to #8 is no, #9 is yes and #10 is yes.

Enrichment

1. Students who are considering sports reporting as a career have a number of excellent memoirs, autobiographies and biographies to read. They might begin with "Post Sports Columnist Shirley Povich Dies," an obituary by Leonard Shapiro, or "A Sporting Life," a reflection on his life written in 1989, by Shirley Povich. Both provide students with a glimpse of Washington sports history and insight into a wonderful sportswriter's career. These are found at

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/sports/longterm/general/povich/povich.htm>.

As Steve Fox writes in his introduction to the collection of Povich articles: "Shirley Povich was covering golf when segregation within the sport made the possibility of the Tiger Woods phenomenon seem as unlikely as multi-million dollar salaries. He was also present at one of the most tragic events in sports history—the massacre of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich. Povich was one of the few journalists able to get inside the Olympic Village and was an eyewitness to the terrorist incident. What dismayed Povich was the cavalier attitude of other athletes as they blared rock music from their transistor radios."

2. How would students improve the Sports section of The Washington Post? Write to Cindy Boren, a Washington Post sports editor. Send your ideas to Tracy Grant, KidsPost editor, who will share them with Ms. Boren.

3. Learn more about the integration of the Washington Redskins. Read "Integrating the Redskins: George Preston Marshall vs. the Government" by William Gildea found at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/education/kidspost/nie/A55798-2002Jun4.html>

"Following the Bouncing Ball" can be found at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/education/kidspost/nie/A63431-2003Mar31.html>

"Tracking Jordan" can be found at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/education/kidspost/nie/A63429-2003Mar31.html>

"By the Numbers" can be found at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/education/kidspost/nie/A63432-2003Mar31.html>

Proper Training

Bobby Hawthorne. *The Coverage of Scholastic Sports*. 88 pages.

This textbook for sports coverage is written by someone who has taught students and knows what teachers need. Includes instruction and examples for writing and photography.

Dean Hume. *Covering Sports: A Complete Sports Writing Handbook*. 120 pages.

Hume helps the daily, weekly and monthly publication adviser. Workbook, tips from professionals and exercises at the end of each chapter.

Jennifer Swan, editor. *Sports Style Guide & Reference Manual*. 375 pages.

Edited by a former Kansas City Star sports copy editor, the manual provides everything you need to know including spelling, definitions and style rules.

Steve Wilstein. *Associated Press Sports Writing Handbook*. 195 pages.

Covers basic sports reporting to columns, features and investigative series. Journalists share their secrets and photographs make you want to turn to every page.

All of these books are available through the Journalism Education Association Bookstore.

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My career began at The Kansas City Star and Times, where I started out by covering high schools, much the way every sports reporter does. I progressed to college and pro sports, which I thoroughly enjoyed for four years. Then, after a move to the Hartford Courant, I filled in as an editor one day and was amazed to discover something I liked even better than writing: improving other people's writing. I've also worked for the National Sports Daily, the first national sports daily newspaper, which was published out of New York from 1989-1990, and the New York Daily News.

Describe your typical day?

An assignment editor in the sports department at the Washington Post typically starts the day around 10:30 a.m. Each editor is in charge of several sports; mine are baseball, the NFL and sports business issues. We always have several long-range projects in the works, but the daily demands of news almost always require us to adjust. I like to begin the day with phone calls to each of my reporters. We compare notes and see if we need to adjust our coverage. Then the editors have a daily planning meeting. After that, we edit broader feature pieces until stories for the daily start arriving, usually around 5 p.m. or 6 p.m.

Our workday usually ends around 8 p.m., although breaking news can keep us here 'til 10.

What is most stressing in your work?

Handling breaking news stories, without a doubt.

What is the most rewarding?

Successfully handling breaking news stories, without a doubt.



Meet the Editor

Cindy Boren

What skills should a sports editor have?

It is essential to be very solidly grounded in grammar and word usage, enjoy reading on all levels (not just sports!), enjoy watching sports, be well-organized.

Sports writers have been accused of being either cheerleaders or bashers of the home team. What do you see as the correct role of sports writers?

Sportswriters must keep an open mind; the home team can win 10 in a row or lose 10 in a row. Rather than cheering or bashing, the sports writer should focus on analysis, interviewing sources with expertise who can explain that winning or losing streak. The sports writer has incredible access and should have cultivated sources who will help him or her see beyond the box score.

How does a sports writer achieve balance and fairness in a game story?

By talking to both sides and then seeking outside sources who can provide independent analysis and interpretation.

Is it the responsibility of the reporters or the editors to know the statistics? Does The Post sports department keep a master file or do reporters use stats provided by the teams?

It is absolutely the responsibility of sports writers and editors to know the stats, otherwise neither can know what happened in a game. Most writers keep their own stats and doublecheck them against stats provided by teams.

Do you work with feature writers to determine a topic or a focus, to develop the content and to refine wording?

Obviously, time is not as pressing a factor with features. My preference is to confer often with the writer. My feeling is that, if I do my job as an editor correctly, when the story arrives there will be very little I'll need to do to it. I won't get a nasty surprise, like a poorly written story or one with huge holes in it.

How closely do reporters work with photographers at the games? In planning coverage?

There isn't much opportunity for coordination at games, given that reporters are not on the sidelines. The sports photo coordinator and assignment editor do confer on feature stories, however. The sports photo coordinator always knows what our long-range feature plans are.

Who makes the final decision on what pictures and cutlines, stories and stats get published daily?

The photo staff and the layout editor choose the photos; the assignment editor has the final call on stories; the copy desk chief supervises cutlines and headlines.

What determines how much space goes for professional, high school, men vs. women, individual and team coverage?

The volume and significance of events drives the amount of coverage each receives.



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How To Write a Sports Story

The sports story is most often deadline reporting. It requires a writer to be prepared. He or she knows the sport, the teams' records, the players' condition and expected match-up.

The Lede

Some sports news stories are best told with a traditional who-what-where-when-why-how lede. Leonard Shapiro reported:

PHOENIX, March 26 - NFL owners today tabled a proposal to add two more teams to the playoffs until their next meeting in May, when it likely will be voted on for implementation next season. They also voted down a proposal that would have called for a one-year experiment to allow both teams in overtime to have at least one offensive possession of the football.

Likewise, the direct lede effectively relates game stories. Here the lede sums up the Bowie State Bulldogs' first Final Four:

LAKELAND, Fla., March 26—With five senior starters leading the way, Bowie State overcame a sluggish first half and eliminated Massachusetts Lowell, 72-62, in the quarterfinals of the NCAA Division II men's basketball tournament at Lakeland Center today.

For other game stories or the news about the players and teams, a delayed lede works to capture the mood and event before the main subject of the article is revealed. For example, Dave Sheinin writes from Orioles' camp:

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla., March 26—Scott Erickson blew out his shoulder. Omar Daal went through a bout of stiffness in his. Sidney Ponson pouted.

Jason Johnson, Rick Helling and Pat Hentgen all failed to seize a rotation spot the way the Baltimore Orioles' coaching staff had hoped, forcing hard choices that still have not been made.

Then there was Rodrigo Lopez. Alone among

the starting pitchers, the Orioles' ace breezed through spring training in his typical low maintenance fashion, requiring little more than a Grapefruit League pocket schedule with his pitching days circled.

In his final tune-up of the spring, Lopez ...

The Story

The game story should highlight significant plays and relate the interaction of both teams. Relate to records and the players' previous actions. "Try to write every game story like it's the only game someone will see all year," advises Ross Siler, former Post summer intern and Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (Va.) graduate. "Give it special treatment. Find a visual and let it drive the reader into the story. Show don't tell. That's a good lesson for all writing."

Use strong verbs, few adjectives and adverbs and minimum sports jargon. Paint a verbal picture through directness of word choice. Dave Sheinin wrote what he observed after the game was over on Oct. 28, 2002:

Barry Bonds could do nothing to the Anaheim Angels now. He could not crush their pitches or clog their base paths or steal their limelight or haunt their sleep. As Game 7 of the World Series came to a close and the Angels wrapped up the first championship in their 42-year history, Bonds could only sit glumly in his dugout—helpless, homerless and ringless again.

Keep up with the action. Know what does not need to be remembered. "I begin writing my game story after the first quarter. We have several deadlines I have to meet, and I typically have to finish my first story right after the game ends," Steve Wyche relates, revealing how he meets deadlines that are close to the end of the game. "I usually write a paragraph or two about what happened after each quarter. If there is an injury or something out of the ordinary, I'll write more during the game itself. I try to watch and write at the

same time, which isn't easy.

"My first story for the paper usually doesn't have any quotes. For my second story, or as we call it in the business, a rewrite or sub, I'll go to the locker room, do my interviews with players and coaches, come back and rewrite my story. I usually have about 45 minutes to an hour to do all that."

The Interview

Think about your questions so you will get stronger responses. Don't ask the obvious. Know when to ask the question.

"In my four years covering the Wizards, I've had to deal with a lot more unhappy locker rooms," states Wyche. "Even if the players are mad, you have to ask them questions. If they don't feel like talking, they'll let you know—nicely or not so nicely. Most NBA players or coaches answer our questions because they know the next night I could be talking to them about a victory."

The Statistics

Keep your own statistics in a special notebook that is prepared ahead of time to record the numbers. Verify your numbers against the team's records. As Wyche states, "I keep some of the statistics myself, like the score and what player scored. However, some of the more detailed statistics, like turnovers, fouls or assists, are kept by an official scorer who updates them on a television monitor on the scorer's table. After the game, we actually get printed statistics, which are a wonderful reference guide."

The Ending

At times you will end with a quotation that sums up the game, the team's attitude or the coach's position. At other times a final play, the next game or minor actions that can be cut off if necessary are better final words.



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Sportswriting by the Numbers

Sportswriting should reflect the world of sports itself. That is, it should be exciting, unpredictable and simply a lot of fun. But like the athlete himself, the sports writer must pay his dues before his performance.

A good starting place is getting the numbers. Nothing anchors a sports story or gives it authority more than statistics.

Let's examine how using numbers can turn a mediocre sports section into a stellar performance:

Game coverage: Real sports fans are just as interested, if not more interested, in the box score at the end of the game story as they are in the story itself. It is a jackpot of information.

For example, the basketball box score will tell the reader the exact number of shots attempted and made from 2-point range, 3-point range and the free throw line. It gives the score after each quarter and the exact performance of every player who stepped on the floor, including shooting percentages, points scored from the floor, free throws made and even individual fouls. It tells how many total fouls the referee called, and it even tells if the coach was tossed out of the game for technical fouls. And more.

Previews: Think how much more interesting a preview of the big weekend game would be if the story told the overall record between the two teams for the past 50 years, or if it had a comparison of scoring with common

opponents. Or if it were accompanied with a statistical comparison in an infographic prepared with artwork and creativity.

Prediction columns: Using numbers here makes the column more than wishful thinking or guessing. Basing predictions on the combined ERA of the pitching staff and the teams' batting averages and other vital statistics might convince readers that the local baseball team does actually have a chance in the upcoming state tournament.

Section content: Imagine a yearbook or newspaper with a comprehensive scoreboard in it. Using agate, or 7-point type, the publication could detail a lot in a little space.

The scoreboard could give complete results of all teams, not just varsity.

The freshman girls soccer team would no longer feel ignored as its game results, league standings and leading individual scorers are now in print for everyone to see. And what a package for the readers! Everyone who knows a player on any team can check how the team and player are doing.

In short, the beginning sports writer must remember a simple rule in journalistic writing: Before you sit down to write, know more than the reader does about your topic. Researching statistics and anchoring stories with numbers will help achieve this goal.

Figures or Words?

Numbers in sports scores, standings and standards are presented as figures, rather than in words: a 6-1-3 record, par 4, 68-32, a high jump of 5-9 1/4. In narratives, use words for the numbers one to nine. This one-nine rule applies to cardinal forms (one, two, 10, 15) and ordinal forms (first, third, 10th, 16th).

Most collective nouns are considered singular. For example, "The Poolesville girls' lacrosse team continued its undefeated season with a 12-11, come-from-behind victory over host Churchill." Or: "At the plate, using her remarkable strength, Frankiewicz collected five hits, including four doubles and drove in half of her team's runs in a 14-0 victory in a Virginia AAA Liberty District game in Vienna."

The Great Ones

On the Web

► <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/sports/longterm/general/povich/povich.htm>

Shirley Povich Tribute

Sections in this tribute to sports journalism legend Shirley Povich include "A Final Farewell: Povich Eulogized as a Hero," "The Latest Generation Honors a Legend," "Povich: A Sporting Life," and selections of his columns. Povich died on Thursday, June 4, 1998, at the age of 92. The war correspondent, sports writer, columnist and editor worked 75 years for The Post. His first byline appeared in 1924; his last on Friday, June 5, having been filed by him on Wed. from his home.

► http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/inside_game/archives/rick_reilly/

Rick Reilly's Insider Archives

Voted National Sportswriter of the Year seven times, Reilly has written for Sports Illustrated more than 16 years, and was the magazine's first signed weekly opinion column writer.

► <http://www.pulitzer.org/year/2000/beat-reporting/>

2000 Beat Reporting Pulitzer Prize

Awarded to George Dohrmann of the St. Paul Pioneer Press for his determined reporting, despite negative reader reaction, that revealed academic fraud in the men's basketball program at the University of Minnesota. Contains portfolio of 10 of his articles.

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A Changing Community, A Changing Role

When The Washington Post began in 1877, D.C. public school classrooms were segregated. The 1950s marked a change in the country and in The Post's position on crucial issues. Herblock's cartoons addressed McCarthyism and America's failure in education and civil rights. Post editorials advocated full enfranchisement. And Shirley Povich called attention to segregation in sports, in particular, the Washington Redskins.

Brown v. Board of Education—1954

“The Supreme Court’s resolution yesterday of the school segregation cases affords all Americans an occasion for pride and gratitude,” The Post editorial read. “It will bring to an end a painful disparity between American principles and American practices. It will help refurbish American prestige in a world which looks to this land for moral inspiration and restore the faith of Americans themselves in their own great values and traditions.”

Integrating the Redskins—1961

Redskins owner George Preston Marshall was proud that his was not an integrated football team, the only one of 14 National Football League teams not to hire black players.

Shirley Povich, sports editor and columnist of The Post, was one of Marshall’s sharpest critics. Povich wrote that the Redskin’s colors were “burgundy, gold and Caucasian.” In his Oct. 31, 1960, “This Morning With Shirley Povich” column, he wrote a powerful lede that began “[the Cleveland Brown’s Jim Brown] integrated the Redskins’ goal line with more than deliberate speed, perhaps exceeding the famous Supreme Court decree. Brown fled the 25 yards like a man in uncommon hurry and the Redskins’ goal line, at least, became interracial.”



FILE PHOTO

Stewart L. Udall, left, meets with reporters hours after he urged George Preston Marshall in a letter to integrate the Redskins.

In another column, he wrote, “Jim Brown, born ineligible to play for the Redskins, integrated their end zone three times yesterday.”

Stewart L. Udall, Department of Interior Secretary, proved to be a worthy opponent of Marshall. On March 24, 1961, Udall sent Marshall a messenger-delivered letter warning him that if he did not integrate the team, the new District of Columbia stadium might not be available to his Redskins in the fall. The stadium was built on land leased from the National Park Service. Days earlier, Udall had attached an anti-discrimination amendment to rules governing the use of national parks.

Washington Post Timeline

1951: The Post moves into its fifth home at 1513-21 L St. N.W.

1952: The Post formally endorses a presidential candidate for the first time since Eugene Meyers purchased the paper in 1933. Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower received The Post’s endorsement.

1954: The Post buys the Times-Herald, doubling its circulation and making it the only morning newspaper in Washington. Many of the Times-Herald’s features are incorporated, including 16 comic strips, giving the paper a massive comics presence that remains today. The Times-Herald logo is maintained, in ever-decreasing sizes, until 1974. After an early history of hostility toward enfranchisement for blacks, The Post becomes a powerful advocate for integration and civil rights after *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of the Supreme Court. The Post opens its first foreign bureau, in London.

Marshall was angry. He had profited from the team he promoted as the “team of the South.” NFL Commissioner Pete Rozelle interceded. Marshall agreed to sign a black player if he found one. Because of a failed ’61 season, the Redskins had first pick in the college draft. They got Heisman Trophy winner Ernie Davis who wanted no part of Marshall. Davis was traded to Cleveland; in the exchange the Redskins received Bobby Mitchell (future Hall of Famer and Redskins’ assistant general manager) and rookie Leroy Jackson, their first black players.

The Redskins fielded an integrated team in their 25th season.

Be a Good Sport

Members of a team need to practice their skills and be on time game day. Everyone needs to learn the rules and respect the opponents and officials. You are captain of your team. As head of the team you have many decisions to make. What would you do in these situations?

1. At practice, you notice that some people play better than others. Two of your classmates do not play well at all. Do you think that only the best players should play or should everyone who comes to practice play on game day?

2. Is it more important to win the game or to have fun?

3. Is success winning the game or trying your hardest?

4. If people in the stands boo a player on your team because of a mistake or failure to make a point, what should you do?

5. One of the members of your team blames other team members when the team doesn't score a point and he sometimes yells at a referee. What do you think of this behavior? Do you think anything should be done?

6. "Sportsman" is defined as "a person who is fair and generous, a good loser and a graceful winner." When you lose, how should you treat your opponents?

Read About Sports

ON THE WEB

➤ David A. Adler with illustrations by Terry Widener. *Lou Gehrig: The Luckiest Man*. Harcourt Brace, 1997.

A poignant biography of the legendary Yankee first baseman who in his 14-year career set a consecutive game record of 2,130 and then benched himself as he began to feel the effects of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, the disease which ended his life at age 37. Even at his retirement ceremony "The Iron Horse" pronounced himself "the luckiest man on the face of the earth."

➤ Robert Burleigh with illustrations by Mike Winmer. *Home Run: The Story of Babe Ruth*. Harcourt Brace, 1998.

Told as a narrative poem, this is a flashback account of Ruth's career as he prepares to hit a home run. Vintage style reproductions of baseball cards dot the pages and detail his awesome career as "The King of Swat."

➤ Kathleen Krull with illustrations by David Diaz. *Wilma Unlimited: How Wilma Rudolph Became the World's Fastest Runner*. Harcourt Brace & Company, 1996.

Wilma Rudolph triumphs over the effects of a childhood bout with polio through the attentive care of her family in Clarksville, Tenn., and in 1960 wins Olympic gold in Rome as a runner. Bold and striking illustrations show her unbuckling steel braces to walk proudly into church and later star on the basketball court as well as track cinders.

➤ Jean Davies Okimoto with illustrations by Doug Keith. *Dear Ichiro*. Sasquatch Books. 2002.

Lessons of tolerance and friendship are learned by eight-year-old Henry at a Seattle baseball game. Henry is determined forever to hate his best friend after they have had a fight. Henry's great-grandfather, a WWII veteran, cheers the Mariners' Ichiro and Sasaki and explains that enemies can sometimes become friends again.



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His First Byline? In 1924, Young Reporter Shirley Povich Literally Had To Feel It to Believe It

Red Smith, Grantland Rice, Jim Murray and Shirley Povich often top the list of sports columnists and writing legends. Povich will always lead The Washington Post's list of great sports writers, columnists and editors. His career at The Post spanned 75 years.

When he was in high school, Povich was "discovered" by Post owner Edward (Ned) McLean on a golf course in Maine. The son of Lithuanian immigrants, Povich helped his family by working at the Kebo Valley Golf Club. In 1922, Povich's second year caddying for McLean, the publisher told the 16-year-old his plans. In his autobiography, Povich shares: "I want you to come with me," McLean

told me. 'You can go to my college and work on my newspaper in Washington.' His college, I learned, was Georgetown University and I was learning too that he owned a newspaper called The Washington Post.'

His first day in D.C., Povich caddied for President Warren G. Harding, a guest at McLean's private estate golf course. The second day, he began work at The Post and enrolled in Georgetown University. "And send the bills to me," McLean told him. This turned out to be a wise investment for McLean.

In 1924, Post sports editor Norman Baxter offered him \$5 more a week than he was earning as a police reporter and night rewrite man. "My first important sports story appeared in The

Post on August 5, 1924," wrote Povich. "Bylines were not automatic in that era. Your name didn't go on a story unless the boss editor decided so. That night



FILE PHOTO BY RICH LIPSKI—THE WASHINGTON POST

Oriole Cal Ripken presents Post reporter Shirley Povich a plaque in 1997 at Oriole Park. Povich threw out the ceremonial first pitch.

Norman Baxter said, 'It's a nice story, Shirley. I'm going to put your name on it.' My first byline. Wow, was I excited. I didn't wait for the proofs to show up from the composing room. I went down there to see for myself, to actually feel with my fingers the type that said 'By Shirley Povich.' Reading it, right to left as metal type must be read by an editor, was no problem. Those Hebrew lessons paid off."

In 1926, McLean, moving Baxter up to managing editor, made Povich sports editor. At the age of 21, he was the youngest in the history of any metropolitan newspaper in the country. In August that same year his long-running column, "This Morning With Shirley Povich" made its debut.

When, the Redskins won the 1937 title, "beating the Bears, 28-21, on an icy field in Chicago where Baugh threw three touchdown passes," Povich was present. "I wrote the lead story, I wrote the play-by-play, and I also wrote the Povich column," Povich shared, revealing the way it was in the early years. "And for the late edition I also ghosted the usual post-game views of Sammy Baugh. Just a night's work on the road. I did not feel abused."

Povich got years of enjoyment out of his inclusion in 1958 in the first volume of *Who's Who in American Women*:

"They simply excerpted my resume from *Who's Who in America*, blithely ignoring that I was described therein as the father of three and husband of one. When the publishers apologized, I told them I was not in a dither, that I was hearing this was no longer a man's world and I was proud to be on the winning side." His friend, Walter Cronkite, a regular reader when he worked at Channel 9 in Washington in the 1950s, telegraphed him to say "Miss Povich, will you marry me?"

Povich supported integration in major league baseball and wrote a 15-part series in 1946—the year prior to Jackie Robinson becoming the first black player in the major leagues with the Brooklyn Dodgers. The series began "Four hundred and fifty-five years after Columbus eagerly discovered America, major league baseball reluctantly discovered the American Negro."

George Preston Marshall considered Povich partly to blame when he was forced to integrate the Redskins. He banned Povich from speaking to his players in the locker room for several years, and once sued Povich and the Post for libel. The jury took 20 minutes to make up its mind, 12-0 against Marshall.

Povich, who wrote his first stories on a typewriter, appeared as a guest speaker on a wide variety of television shows, including a few hosted by his youngest son Maury and in Ken Burns's baseball series on PBS. In 1976, he was elected to the writers wing of the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. He had Baseball Writer's card No. 1 in his wallet and covered 60 World Series and 20 Super Bowls. More than 75 years after he began work at The Post, his last column was filed on a laptop from his home the day before he died.



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Classic Sport Stories in the 20th Century

Excerpts from “the first rough draft of history” as reported in The Washington Post provide a glimpse of yesterday’s athletes and sports history. After reading, place the events in the context of the time period.

► 1920

“Say It Ain’t So, Joe”

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/education/kidspost/nie/A57227-1999Sep29.html>

In what became known as the Black Sox Scandal, eight Chicago White Sox players were accused of deliberately losing the 1919 World Series against the Cincinnati Reds in return for cash from a gambling syndicate. “Say it ain’t so, Joe,” a tearful boy reportedly exclaimed to his hero, “Shoeless” Joe Jackson, one of the most famous of the accused. An excerpt from The Post of Sept. 29, 1920, by the Associated Press.

► 1924

“Love Them Nats”

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/education/kidspost/nie/A42957-1999Oct11.html>

Sportswriting bordering on hagiography characterized The Post’s coverage of the final game of the 1924 World Series between the Washington Nationals and the New York Giants. (The Washington team changed its name from the Senators to the Nationals from 1905 to 1956, then changed it back to the Senators.) An excerpt from The Post of Oct. 11, 1924, by N.W. Baxter, sports editor.

Tony Kornheiser on Shirley Povich

I have been blessed in my career to have worked alongside the two finest sports columnists of all time, Red Smith and Shirley Povich. I worked with Red at The New York Times, and with Shirley at The Post. They were elegant writers and urbane men, impeccably dressed and unfailingly polite. Gentlemen and scholars. Their skills with words and logic were so sharp that when they took you apart in print, you never

► 1937

“Slingin’ Sammy Baugh”

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/education/kidspost/nie/A50122-1999Dec13.html>

The Boston Redskins became the Washington Redskins in 1937, and won the NFL championship that same year. “Slingin’ Sammy” Baugh, who actually got his nickname from an earlier incarnation as a baseball player, became a local hero and led the Redskins to another championship in 1942. He retired after 16 seasons in 1952. An excerpt from The Post of Dec. 13, 1937, by Shirley Povich, staff correspondent who captures the Redskins’ first taste of glory.

► 1971

“Farewell to the Senators”

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/education/kidspost/nie/A3159-1999Oct1.html>

The mayhem of the Washington Senators’ last game at RFK Stadium—in which screaming fans rushed the field, forcing the team to forfeit its last contest before owner Robert Short moved the team to Arlington, Tex.—was a dark ending for one of baseball’s most forlorn and storied franchises. An excerpt from

felt the blade, you only saw the blood.

I adored them both, and tried to copy their styles. People often said, correctly, that I couldn’t even carry their typewriters. But in fact I have. There were days when I carried Red’s typewriter up the steps to the press box in Yankee Stadium and Shea. I have carried Shirley’s typewriter out to the car from the press box at the Preakness and RFK. I felt honored to do it.

The Post of Oct. 1, 1971, by Myra MacPherson and Tom Huth, staff writers.

► 1972

“An Olympic Nightmare”

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/education/kidspost/nie/A23843-1999Sep6.html>

A terrorist attack at the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich resulted in the murder of 11 Israeli athletes. While the games did continue after the horrific events, they were a subdued affair, with most of the spirit of international competition evaporated. Two excerpts from The Post of Sept. 6, 1972, by William Gildea, staff writer.

► 1975

“Ashe Aces Wimbledon”

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/education/kidspost/nie/A99031-1999Jul6.html>

Arthur Ashe was 10 years older than Jimmy Connors when he defeated him to become the first black men’s champion at Wimbledon in 1975. He retired from competition in 1980, and in 1987 wrote *A Hard Road to Glory*, a history of black athletes in America. An excerpt from The Post of July 6, 1975, by Barry Lorge, special to the Washington Post.



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YOU and YOUR RIGHTS

The Athlete as Role Model: Sportsmanship and the Extent to Which Athletes Must Speak

Former NBA player Charles Barkley has often asserted professional athletes should not be viewed as role models. He reasons that most professional athletes are known only for a single skill or set of skills that does not correspond to any moral authority. He has noted that many of the best known athletes, including Dennis Rodman, Tonya Harding, and himself, are as well known for their misdeeds as they are for their athletic accomplishments.

Even when an athlete's visibility results from misdeeds, athletes have long served as role models. Fans may attach great weight to an athlete's opinions, and younger fans often consciously mimic athletes. Barkley's criticism of media attention to athletes is supported by the increasing media coverage given to numerous athletes, even when their comments were unimportant, uniformed or outright offensive. During his entire career, baseball great Ty Cobb spouted off racist dogma, which rarely made it into print. Gone are the days when an athlete's actual words are recorded. Instead, a sportswriter's more articulate and grammatically correct words are often substituted.

Allen Iverson is one of the NBA's most high-profile players, despite his reputation for selfishness and disrespect for rules. Iverson is no friend of the media, which has reported a litany of criminal charges he has faced since he was a teenager. His rare interviews produce little controversy though, and his negative image likely minimizes his product endorsement visibility. Nonetheless, when he released a rap CD, negative media coverage of his homophobic and misogynistic lyrics resulted in the CD

being withdrawn. The NBA distanced itself from the CD, but not from one of its best and most visible players, who was not very contrite about the affair.

Compared to Iverson's conduct, the behavior of former NBA star Dennis Rodman or former NFL quarterback Jim McMahon seems silly. Off court, Rodman's numerous interviews revealed a man given too much media attention whose efforts to be controversial occasionally backfired, such as when he attributed his poor play in Utah to Mormons. McMahon exemplified the type of athlete favored by the media: the "bad boy" who commits no truly despicable acts, and tends to make quotable comments, which in McMahon's case centered on the controversial nature of his spiked hair and pierced ear. While Iverson's negative image undermines the moral weight of his words, the self-conscious flamboyance in the words of Rodman, McMahon, and many other athletes offer only a superficial role after which to model.

Actions Rather Than Speech

Barkley's candor, rare in sports world, has earned him a kind of respect that his athletic ability could not, making him a role model who puts professional athletics into perspective. Certainly other athletes have served successfully as role models, and in the previous century, African-American athletes pioneering the integration of sports inspired others facing institutional racism. Multi-talented athletes Paul Robeson (college football), Woody Strode (professional football), and Jackie Robinson (professional baseball) did more than just integrate, they promoted athletics as relevant to a

well-rounded society, and all went on to successful second careers. But they were not particularly outspoken during their playing careers, consciously avoiding controversy beyond the integration itself (though Robinson would become increasingly outspoken during the course of his career).

The players who integrated team sports set a standard for a role model who leads by example rather than words. Baseball stars from Willie Mays and Roberto Clemente, to Ichiro Suzuki and Kurt Abbott, undermined stereotypes about African-Americans, Hispanics, Japanese, and people with disabilities. Clemente's selfless play on the field—and his death in the crash of a plane that was transporting relief supplies to earthquake victims in Nicaragua—illustrated the ideal sports role model leading by example. More recently, charitable works of NBA players David Robinson and Dikembe Mutumbo and former NFL player Reggie White exemplify this model.

The communal nature of team sports is well-matched to such noble leaders who are silent on political issues, but this image was not confined to team sports. Jesse Owens won four gold medals at the 1936 Olympics, and Joe Louis took the heavyweight boxing title from the German champion in 1938. Champions Owens and Louis inspired people without words, scoring moral victories against favored German opponents and its so-called racial superiority. Althea Gibson pioneered integration of women's tennis in the 1950s, letting her successful play speak for her.

There are many reasons an athlete may not speak out. Some may want to positively represent a marginalized



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group or preserve team harmony. Some may have nothing to say on the subject or no desire to voice opinions on the subject. Some may desire to project an image that does not intimidate fans or discourage product endorsements. Most professional athletes fall into one or more of these categories. What motivates an athlete to speak out on an issue that most do not, and should what they say matter? What happens to an athlete if she is too forthright?

What Do Athletes Have to Say? Athletes Who Speak After Their Careers End

On the road to success, athletes are managed by a succession of parents, coaches, agents, managers and publicists. Much of an athlete's public image may be a creation of one or more of these handlers. The rewards offered on the ladder of success—scholarships, the opportunity to play professionally, product endorsements—may depend greatly on an athlete's willingness to project a certain image: interesting but not controversial. This may help explain why many players defer their outspokenness until after their playing careers end.

Jackie Robinson broke Major League Baseball's race barrier in 1947. In his 10-year career, he put an articulate voice and non-confrontational face on the integration of baseball. During his career, Robinson starred in a movie of his story that was frank in its portrayal of racism, but his political leadership qualities emerged after he retired and accepted a position with the NAACP. In the 1960s, Robinson campaigned for black civil rights, and his independence of thought was demonstrated by his occasional support of Republican candidates he thought more sympathetic to the plight of blacks in America.

On the other hand, former football

star Jim Brown was relatively outspoken and flamboyant in his playing days, but not particularly political. After he retired, his outspokenness developed a political edge, and he became a leading proponent for economic self-sufficiency in the African-American community. By contrast, former football star Bill Russell, always more philosophical than political, came into the NBA with well-formed views on race, commenting early in his career, "The basic problem in Negro America is the destruction of race pride. One could say we have been victims of psychological warfare, in a sense, in that this is a white country, and all the emphasis is on being white." Since his retirement, he has largely snubbed the basketball power structure he so openly distrusts, and he is now as invisible as Brown is visible.

Some athletes speak out after their careers end to avoid harming their careers. Former New York Yankees pitcher Jim Bouton wrote a tell-all book about his playing days. Regardless of his reasons for doing so, his revelations about sex, alcohol, prescription drugs and other subjects took baseball off its pedestal and earned him the enmity of the sport. Former football player Dave Kopay's 1975 biography about being a gay professional football player addressed a subject that was taboo then and is still today.

One memorably outspoken biography was that of former baseball pitcher Doc Ellis, which included, among other revelations, the admission that he had been on LSD when he pitched his 1970 no-hitter. Ellis is joined by former Los Angeles Dodger Maury Wills and former NBA and University of Maryland star John Lucas whose confessional stories about their drug abuse undermined the atmosphere of denial regarding drug use among

athletes and put pressure on the major sports leagues to be more proactive about intervention.

Some athletes have pursued careers in sports management and have tempered their outspokenness with a desire to influence from the inside. Hank Aaron, Frank Robinson and Bill White used their positions with baseball teams or with Major League Baseball to promote team ownership by blacks and more opportunities for black managers and executives. Other athletes left careers in sports to pursue politics. Bill Bradley, Tom McMillan, J.C. Watts and Steve Largent represent liberal or conservative views in government that they were not particularly known for during their playing days.

Athletes Who Speak During Their Careers

During the 1960s and 1970s, athletes became increasingly vocal about their economic rights. Through this self-interest, perhaps inspired by civil rights movements of the time, professional athletes as a group were politicized to a degree not previously seen. Recognizing their bargaining strength both as labor and product, professional baseball, football, basketball and hockey players formed and strengthened unions to negotiate a greater percentage of revenue. From this era, a generation of players emerged that was not afraid to question team management or confront the league as a whole on issues ranging from salaries and compensation to league drug policies and treatment of player injuries.

A milestone in athletic empowerment was the formation of the Association of Tennis Professionals in 1969. Top tennis players, led by Arthur Ashe, used their position as both the product sold and as free agents, and won a greater percentage of profits and



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greater control of their sport. That same year, Ashe was denied a visa to play in South Africa because he was African-American. He used the denial to draw attention to apartheid in South Africa, encouraging fellow athletes to boycott international sporting events that included South Africa. Ashe never ceased to speak out, and when he contracted AIDS from a blood transfusion, he actively promoted AIDS awareness. He is remembered in Richmond, Va., his hometown, with a statue along Monument Avenue, integrating the avenue's statues that previously featured only Confederate generals.

Other athletes who spoke up during this era did not fare so well. In 1964, heavyweight boxing champion Cassius Clay publicly converted to Islam and became Muhammad Ali. In 1967, he refused induction into the Army, citing religious beliefs. He was subsequently convicted and sentenced to five years imprisonment (later overturned by the Supreme Court), and he was forced to retire for two years in the prime of his career. In 1971, otherwise soft-spoken basketball MVP Lew Alcindor changed his name to Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, and many in sports have since been public in their adherence to Islam and, in more recent years, to Christianity.

In 1965, the sports world largely respected Jewish baseball star Sandy Koufax's decision not to pitch in a World Series game that fell on Yom Kippur. In 1996, Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf (formerly Chris Jackson) suffered an NBA suspension and verbal abuse from fans after refusing to stand for the National Anthem, citing his religious beliefs. Even Muslim NBA star Hakeem Olajuwon admonished him. The NBA tolerates all manner of horseplay during the Anthem, as long as a player stands during its delivery. Abdul-Rauf's

principled position nearly cost him his career, which he saved by finally agreeing to stand and chant prayers.

During the 1968 Olympics, Tommy Smith and John Carlos, the U.S. winners of gold and bronze medals in the 200 meter race, raised black-gloved fists during the medal award ceremony. There had been calls for a boycott of the games by African American athletes. Smith and Carlos chose instead to express symbols of both economic oppression of blacks (they wore no shoes) and black unity (the raised fists). This relatively innocuous gesture drew support from the silver medalist (a white Australian) and other prominent athletes. It also earned them a suspension from the U.S. team.

Tennis star Martina Navratilova has always been outspoken, but no more so than numerous other top athletes. While tennis, not her sexual orientation, is generally the focus of Navratilova's comments, she makes no attempt to deny her lesbianism. In recent years, perhaps no other athlete has achieved such recognition unaccompanied by a comparable level of endorsements. Craig Hodges, a former teammate of Michael Jordan, criticized Jordan's silence on African-American issues following the Los Angeles riots in 1991. The following year he was out of the NBA for good after having played a valuable role on a championship team.

What Is at Stake When an Athlete Speaks?

The most widely known names in U.S. sports in recent years are Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods. Jordan and Woods share two other characteristics, their large product endorsement income and their silence on political and social issues. Jordan can be quite critical of players, coaches,

management, or sports economics, but neither Jordan nor the NBA are interested in discussing non-basketball issues.

The list of athletes who criticize U.S. economics, foreign policy or race relations and still receive product endorsements is virtually non-existent. College athletes who criticize their athletic program often have scholarships withdrawn, which may affect their chances of becoming professional athletes. Professional athletes who criticize their teams or league, or are too outspoken on political or social issues, may soon be unemployed. Athletes who admit to being different—whether by sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, religious belief, political adherence, or whatever—risk being ostracized from an industry that desires conformity and shies away from debate and controversy where possible.

The rewards are great for the silent athlete, as Jordan, Woods and other superstars know well. The experiences of Ali, Navratilova, Hodges, Tommy Smith, Carlos and Abdul-Rauf send a powerful message to athletes about the consequences of articulating your conscience. Today, as always, an athlete speaks at his or her own risk.

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NAME _____

Sportsmanship and the Extent to Which Athletes Must Speak

Rate the following issues on the basis of relative importance to you and then the relative risk of an athlete (to lose his or her job, to miss out on endorsements, etc.) speaking on this issue.

Rank in Order of Importance (1-24)	Relative risk on a scale of 1-5 (1=no risk, 3= moderate risk, and 5= high risk)	
		A coach supplying steroids to players
		A coach supplying amphetamines to players
		A coach supplying pain killers to players
		A coach molesting a student/athlete
		A coach having sex with a student/athlete
		A coach giving money to a student in violation of school rules
		An athletic department supporter giving money to a student in violation of school rules
		A professional player using steroids or other performance enhancement supplements (Think about whether it makes a difference if the supplement is proven to be harmful.)
		A player or manager betting on sports
		A player or manager betting on their own team
		A player or manager betting against their own team
		A teammate abusing his spouse
		A teammate abusing cocaine
		A teammate abusing marijuana
		A teammate abusing alcohol
		A college teammate cheating on an exam to remain eligible for athletics
		Inequity of pay in professional sports
		Treatment of sports injuries
		Lack of pay in college/high school sports
		Issues of gender
		Issues of sexual orientation
		Issues of race
		Economic issues
		Foreign Policy Issues

YOU and YOUR RIGHTS

The Marshall-Brennan Fellowship Program at American University's Washington College of Law trains talented upper-level law students to teach a unique course on constitutional rights and responsibilities to hundreds of students in Washington, D.C. area public high schools. For more information about the program, please contact Michelle Carhart, program coordinator, at mcarhart@wcl.american.edu. For curricular information or information on how to get involved, please contact Maryam Ahranjani, academic coordinator, at mahranjani@wcl.american.edu.



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The Athlete as Role Model: Sportsmanship and the Extent to Which Athletes Must Speak

Questions for Discussion

1. What was your criteria in deciding the order of importance of the issues on the list?
2. How did you assess relative risk? Should we be concerned about whether an athlete will miss out on endorsements on the basis of important speech? In other words, is an athlete's job to play sports or to make money through endorsements and memorabilia, or both?
3. Should the celebrity of an athlete make that athlete's opinion more important? Compare with the celebrity of a film or music star.
4. Does it make a difference if the athlete speaking out plays a team rather than an individual sport?
5. Should players' unions develop social or political policy positions beyond those directly affecting their sport?
6. Should professional athletes be more involved with the welfare of high school and college athletes?
7. Do sports fans want their favorite athletes to offer opinions on political or social issues? Does that matter?
8. Does the First Amendment require that an athlete speak?
9. Does the First Amendment protect an athlete's right to speak?
10. Does the First Amendment protect an athlete's right not to speak?



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SALLY JENKINS

Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Nothingness

Aug. 18, 2002

When, exactly, did athletes abdicate their citizenship? There is private life and there is public life, and we all share a public responsibility, except, it seems, for those separate-status citizens typified by Tiger Woods. It's not Woods's job to get Martha Stewart a membership at male-only Augusta National. But surely we can hope that when asked, Woods, a Stanford-educated 26-year-old, would form a reasonable reply on the subject of discrimination. And not just for his own sake.

Increasingly, some of our most prominent athletes don't seem to live in this country so much as they merely maintain residency in it, usually in a tax haven (frequently Orlando). Athletes are skilled corporate pitchmen, they work in a media-created industry and most of them have been exposed to college campuses. Yet they contrive to make themselves seem poorly informed, if not stupid.

This is not intended to condemn all athletes, some of whom are great activists in their communities, such as David Robinson, Andre Agassi and Dikembe Mutumbo. However, ask a golfer in the PGA Championship this weekend to comment on the issue of the day, and more likely than not, the reply you will get is, "I'm an athlete, not a politician." This is not an answer—it's a form of civic laziness.

The most recent example is Woods's stammering and hedging on the subject of discrimination at country clubs. Asked during the British Open at Muirfield how he felt about playing at a club that excludes women, Woods

responded as if he had never once contemplated anything more serious than the flight of a dimpled ball. "They're entitled to set up their own rules the way they want them," he said. "It would be nice to see everyone have an equal chance to participate if they wanted to, but there is nothing you can do about it." When a hue and cry arose that he had virtually endorsed segregation, Woods added a meek little note on his Web site saying he would like to see women members at Augusta, home of The Masters, "but I'm only one voice."

The question I mean to address is not gender segregation, the right to assemble or exclude. Rather, why should athletes be exempt from basic civic discourse simply by virtue of what they do?

Athletes invariably take refuge in one of two positions, either they aren't qualified to comment, or it's not their job. But they are qualified - as qualified as you or me to read and think about the world around us. When they don't, the accompanying message is, "It's not my business." But it's everybody's business. Sports do not exist apart from the problems of the world; in fact they are rife with the problems of the world: labor disputes, drug testing and organized crime, to name a few. Discrimination is a public issue, and moreover, discrimination at country clubs is about Woods's public business, his industry.

The suggestion that for athletes to display civic responsibility would compromise their job performance is equally bogus. This implies the work that great athletes do is somehow

harder. It's not. It's only more rare; not everyone can do it. Being a professional athlete is certainly no harder than being, say, a farmer, for whom life and work are indistinguishable.

The real problem is that Woods has to be able to argue from principle here, and he can't. Every time he and his peers play at Augusta it's a televised advertisement that segregation is still permitted if you can make the greens fees. What's more, Woods has made a Nike commercial about how country clubs exclude him for his color.

Too many athlete-abdicators have been told by their advisers to duck issues in order to preserve their status as popular corporate pitchmen. I asked an agent where he stood on athletes taking public stances. "I would never counsel it," he says. "When you state an opinion you only make people mad. Look, these athletes get paid to appeal to the masses. There's no up side to it."

This is not just evasive, it's corrosive. Every year at this time, my mind wanders back to the PGA Championship at Shoal Creek in Birmingham. It wasn't until 1990 that the governing bodies of golf addressed country club racism, and then only because it was mortified into it when it was revealed that the PGA host club, Shoal Creek, openly discriminated against blacks. During a week of threatened pickets and corporate sponsor pullouts, the PGA Tour was aghast to discover that 17 of its 43 primary events were held at all-white clubs.

But when asked to reflect on this state of affairs, the golfers refused.

It wasn't their business, they said.

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“I play golf, I don’t make policy,” the late Payne Stewart said. This attitude, of course, is how a major championship wound up being played at an all-white club as late as 1990. And it’s a perfect example of why everyone, including athletes, should participate in public discourse.

It’s not enough for Woods to merely play great golf – or even to establish a youth foundation. These things are rare and commendable, but they don’t necessarily fulfill the requirements of good citizenship. Good citizenship is an old-fashioned term, but it’s regained intellectual heat among public policy thinkers. What is the definition of citizenship? The strictest technical interpretation is residency; either you were born here or you were naturalized. The Founding Fathers went to great pains to ensure the liberty of all citizens to be merely that, a resident; Tiger Woods doesn’t have to do anything he doesn’t want to do, including speak up.

“On the other hand it’s also clear the Founding Fathers reflected their culture and backgrounds and had certain expectations, often inarticulated and unexpressed, of what people who live together should do,” says Stephen Steinberg, co-editor of “Discourse in America.” Basic dialogue is part of citizenship. As John Adams wrote to Thomas Jefferson, “You and I ought not to die before we have explained ourselves to each other.”

So what constitutes a moderate definition of citizenship? “If we could get people to vote and read the paper,” Steinberg suggests. “And frankly I’d settle for reading the paper because if you read it, you’ll find it so

upsetting and interesting that you’ll vote.”

Harvard’s Tom Sander, executive director of the Kennedy School of Government’s seminar on Civic Engagement in America, says of citizenship, “Our vision is threefold. First the technical definition of residency, second the strength of one’s public political participation, and third is the extent to which one is a social capitalist, a strong builder of trust and reciprocity in one’s community and workplace.”

In that context, citizenship is a matter of small daily acts, and athletes are every bit as obliged as you or me to commit them. They don’t have a special responsibility, but they do have “the same responsibility that others have,” says Sander.

What they also have, Sander suggests, is greater opportunity. A small everyday act of citizenship when committed by Tiger Woods has immense power: attending a rally, voting or just giving blood. “They can be a model for showing what a responsible and full life is,” Sander suggests. The philosophy is not unlike that of John Thompson, when he was the head coach at Georgetown. He used to say of his star players, “This man will be in the public eye for a long time. People will hang on his every word. I want to be sure he has something to say.”

Athletes should engage in the American dialogue, even at risk of being foolish or wrong. When they abdicate involvement in public discussion, what they seem to be saying is, “Not my problem.” Or, as Martin Luther King said, “Those who sit at rest buy their quiet with disgrace.”

Snapshot



FILE PHOTOS

Shirley Povich, top, at age 92 and above at age 18, on one of his first assignments as a city reporter for The Washington Post in 1923.