

Yearbook Sports Writing

2013 KSPA REGIONAL CONTEST

Assignment

Write a 300- to 350-word yearbook sports story based on the information, quotes and observations below. The story is about Ad Astra's infamous Ninja Turtle cheering section.

This is a copy-writing contest only; no headline should be written. Background information and quotes have been provided for you below the photos. The writer should determine which information is relevant (including information from the photos) and important to the story. Students may write in pencil or pen. Students may use dictionary, thesaurus, and AP Stylebooks. The use of personal listening devices, recording devices, cell phones or computers is prohibited.

Background

In 1991, a group of juniors and seniors got together to form the Ninja Turtle cheering section at football games. They started with 25 students that first year as a rowdy alternative to the organized cheering sections led by the cheerleaders and the band.

After 22 football seasons, the Ninja Turtle are still considered a rowdy alternative, and they're not officially sanctioned by the school. But the group has grown to include almost 75 sophomores, juniors and seniors who wear costumes – from Ninja Turtles to Yoda to regular ninja fighters and just about everything in between – and lend support to the Box Turtle football team.

Near the end of halftime at each varsity football game, the Ninja Turtle cheering section chants its most famous cheer, Shell 'Em, Turtles. This cheer simulates a mixture between a World War II bomber taking off and a roller coaster. During the cheer the crowd screams wildly as it follows the conductor's lead. This year's conductor was senior Chris "Leonardo" Torme, who dresses up as Leonardo, the Ninja Turtle, for every game.

Description

You are a member of Ad Astra High School's yearbook staff. Your editor has assigned you to write the copy about the varsity football team for the sports section of the book.

School Info

Name: Ad Astra High School
Location: Aspera, Kansas
Mascot: Box Turtles
Enrollment: 850 (grades 9-12)
School Colors: Green & Gold
Yearbook: The Honeybee
Newspaper: The Star

Contest Info

This is a carry-in contest.

Please attach your assigned contest number in the upper right-hand corner on the back of your photo.

Do not put your name on the entry. If you do, your entry will be disqualified.

Students are not to request help or advice from anyone other than the KSPA Executive Director. All work must be that of the contestant.



Four senior captains are always chosen to dress as the four major turtles: Donatello, Raphael, Michelangelo and Leonardo. Leonardo is always the squad captain and leader of the "Shell 'Em" cheer.

Game attendees, including the administrators, enjoy the Shell 'Em cheer. Principal Emmylou Harris joined Torme at the homecoming game this year, cheering next to Torme in the first row of the grandstands and mimicking Torme's every move. Ad Astra lost the homecoming game 17-14 to crosstown rival John Brown.

Torme said that the key to the Ninjas' success this year is taking pride in their team but also having fun with it. The Ninjas also dress up in costumes on game days and even wear them during school.

Some Ninjas are difficult to miss, such as Barry Gibbs who wears a green "Where's Waldo?" outfit or Bo McMillan who dresses as the famed video game character Mario. Senior Bruce Chubick dresses as Michelangelo the Ninja Turtle to show school pride. Senior Erica Piatkowski dresses as Raphael, and her twin sister, Emily, dresses as Donatello.

Another change is the number of cheers the Ninjas added to their arsenal this year. They are using many new cheers as well as ones from last year to use throughout the game.

This year's group publicized itself on Facebook.

The Ninjas tailgate in the visitor's parking lot before home varsity games. This year, the four senior captains sold Chubick's mom's chili in the parking lot to raise money for the Piatkowski family, who's father, Eric, had just lost his job as a conductor for the Aspera-Topeka Railroad Company.

When the tailgate was over, the Ninjas arrived as a group at 6:45 p.m. to get seats in the student section.

The third quarter is considered "Pizza Power" time for the group, as two undergraduate Ninjas bring a dozen pizzas to the group.

Although many Ninja leaders are seniors, they allow sophomores and juniors to join in every aspect of what they do.

Quotes

Varsity football player and senior Ross Gload

"The Ninjas are a source of motivation to play the game. We get so fired up with the 'Shell 'em' cheer, we just want to rip the other team's heads off."

"We know that even when we have to go on the road, the first three rows – at least – of the student section will be at every game. That's awesome."

"When you go out there and the whole crowd is jumping around, yelling and screaming and hating on the other student section, you feel like you have to win this game for them."

Senior Chris Torme

"I think the Ninjas of 2011 failed to show up every game. They did a bad job of communicating with the younger grades, like not inviting them and making them feel welcome. We have a lot of friends on the football team and we want to show up and support them."

Torme to the crowd at the homecoming game against John Brown

Into a green megaphone: "Cowabunga, Turtles!" Torme then begins his B-1 bomber impersonation, making noises with his throat, attempting to mimic a plane. He then throws his arms out wide as if they were wings and begins to make explosion sounds. Finally, he asks the crowd, "What are we gonna do to the Crusaders?" The Ninjas then begins to chant "Shell 'em" until the entire crowd joins in. Players on the bench stand and face the crowd, waving their arms.

Bruce Chubick

"We have been doing the tailgate at about 5:45 or 6 p.m. It lasts to about 6:45 and it's just where everybody gathers before the game. We grill hotdogs, hamburgers, have some drinks. This year we sold Mom's chili, too. Then we pack up and all head out as a Ninja section into the game together."

Senior Erica Piatkowski

"The seniors control what the Ninja section does, but everyone participates equally. The seniors start off what we are supposed to do, and then everybody follows."

Principal Emmylou Harris

"It's a safe display of school spirit, they're just trying to encourage the team and not disrupt anybody – teachers or parents, so I think they have done a good job with that. Plus, they didn't mind an old lady joining them for 'Shell 'Em.' I had a blast."