

Sports writing

Shortcode	Description
AP: Strong	The writing here shows a strong awareness of writing conventions generally followed by news writers. Of course, writers should follow AP style in almost all cases, except in cases when the publication's stylebook dictates otherwise. This kind of writing creates consistency for the reader, putting the emphasis on the content and not variations in punctuation, abbreviations or other usage. Well done with copy editing for style here.
AP: Weak	News writers generally write with more consistency than this. The rules that govern this consistency are called "style" generally and the most universally used style is "Associated Press style." Consider how the writing could more closely follow this style, or, if not AP style, then a consistent style dictated by the publication's style guide. Regardless of the guide used, consistency is the goal, so that the reader can focus on content rather than variations and irregularities in the writing.
Editorializing	The term "editorializing" refers to the insertion of opinion into a piece of writing. Sports writers are often tempted to cheerlead for their team. Avoid that because it is your opinion and generally doesn't belong in your reporting. Editorializing in sports can be fixed by (1) attributing an opinions to the people who said it; (2) being careful with adjectives that reveal the writer's opinion, such as "good" or "successful"; (3) avoid overstating reality with phrases like "everyone loves her"; and (4) avoiding using first and second person pronouns like "I" and "you."
Lead: Excellent	Readers of this story will NEED to keep reading because the lead is excellent at inviting the reader's curiosity. This can be difficult to do in news writing. However, it is done well here. The word choices and the news judgment displayed here will attract readers and make it more likely that they will finish the story. Congrats.
Lead: Weak	If a story is to succeed, the lead of the story must be a mixture of inviting, informing and active. A lead can invite by presenting issues or conflicts that the story will work to resolve. The lead also might inform readers of the vital facts of the story right at the outset, ensuring that they understand the issue even if they quit reading immediately. Finally, a lead should strive to be energetic with its verb choices and sentence construction to attract reader attention.
Quotes: Strong	This writing vividly displays the people interviewed for the story. Quotations bring to life the personality of the source, in addition to allowing those sources to voice their opinions. Gathering such quotations demands time and attention to listening while interviewing. The result? Your readers feel like they have met your sources and had interesting conversations with them. What a gift you have given them.
Quotes: Style	Aside from gathering strong quotations from interviews, writing for sports demands a strong display of those quotations within the story. We can describe this clear and consistent display of interview material as "quotation style." Strong quotation style demands (1) proper use of punctuation, whether commas, quotation marks or periods; (2) consistent attribution, with "said" as the most common attribution verb; (3) logical paragraph breaks to help the reader transition into and away from the quotation. Read professional sports reporting to see how quotations are commonly attributed there.
Sentences: Strong	Sports writing depends on strong, declarative sentences that make the facts clear. Verbs must be active and vivid to make the sentences compelling. This kind of writing takes restraint. Some sentences must be short. However, others must be longer and more complicated to fully explain facts and context. This story showcases those kinds of sentence structures, much to the benefit of the reader.
Sentences: Unclear	At the most basic level, sentences should communicate a singular idea or piece of information to the reader. The failure of a sentence to do so can be the result of poor word choice, misplaced punctuation or simply not having a clear goal for the sentence's purpose. Regardless, the problem can be most quickly and effectively spotted by reading the entirety of the story out loud. Places where your reading stumbles will likely be places where the reader will stumble as well.
Sentences: Wordy	Writing concisely has always been a goal of sports writers. Consider how this piece of writing could have used fewer words to communicate the same facts and message. Where are excess words usually found within a sentence? A good place to look is within the verb phrase. For instance, "The team has been considered as ranked #1" could be "The team is ranked #1." Making your writing more compact will make it possible to include more facts and quotes for your reader to enjoy.
Sports: Good Stats	While quotes make up much of sports writing research, reporters strive to find the dates, numbers and other facts that explain the topic. This story showcases not just basic factual research that the reader expects, but also unexpected statistics from trustworthy sources. This kind of work takes time but is rewarded by readers who hunger for the authoritative number-driven take on a story. Nice work with statistical research indeed.
Sports: Key moments	The analysis of a season, a game or tournament hinges on a sports writer's ability to find pivotal key moments, identify them and explain them for the reader. Consider how this story might have located the turning point of this story and revealed it for the reader. This takes judgment and consideration, but it helps to create drama for your reader and allows them to feel like they have learned from your reporting.
Sports: Observation	One of the key reasons that readers seek out sports stories is to feel like they were there, when they might have actually been miles away. Consider how this story could better describe details: its sights and sounds, its characters and its environment. Sure, when doing this, sports writers are often tempted to give both observation AND opinion. Notice that the two are different: you can observe your surroundings without editorializing and cheerleading for your team. How would more observational writing change this story?
Sports: Opposing team	The first duty of a student sports writer is to thoroughly cover the school's team. Your audience is certainly most interested in those players and coaches. However, consider if this story could have engaged the performance and reaction of the other team. Could more quotes from the opposition be used? What people from the opposing team were significant? Who deserves to be mentioned by name?
Sports: Score/sport	While it may seem needlessly basic sometimes, it is often important to identify the sport being played when writing for that section of your publication. Doing so avoids the audience puzzling about whether the reporting is from volleyball, soccer or wrestling. Also, if writing a game story, be sure to provide the score clearly and early in the story. Regardless of what some old-timers might have said, there is nothing more important than who wins the game (and by how much).

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Sports: Weak Stats	Look at the sports section of the newspaper or the scoreboard of a smartphone sports app. What do you see? Endless numbers. Sports writing features statistics -- including the obvious final score -- because readers care about the leading scorer's stats, the lead-off hitter's batting average and the outside hitter's number of kills. How could the story have incorporated stats? Who would be a reliable and timely source? How can stats be quickly gathered? Once a young sports writer's work incorporates this kind of basic numerical information, it is time to work on advanced stats that further deepen the reader's understanding.
Structure: Lead buried	When the structure of a sports story fails, it often flounders in a predictable way: "burying the lead." What does that mean? If sports writers put the most vital piece of information (the score, the season's outcome) somewhere other than near the start of the story, they have likely buried the lead. Consider how the audience for this story might hope to learn something from your reporting earlier than you provide it to them. What do they need to know right at the start?
Structure: Strong	The story structure here anticipates what the reader wants to know and -- more importantly -- when they want to know it. This takes planning and forethought. Often, but not always, this structure is the inverted pyramid structure plus some chronological storytelling. Feeding information to the reader often becomes more complicated than simply ranking facts in order of importance and displaying them in that sequence. Nice work with this complicated task of structuring the story.
Structure: Transitions	Sports writing doesn't often demand long or complicated transition statements. Writers are often encouraged to simply move from topic to topic. However, when these switches are particularly abrupt, the reader feels off balance. Try to locate moments in the story here that could use even a slight transition to ease the switch in topic.
Topic: Strong	A topic like this is excellent for your audience. The "elements" of news writing are often abbreviated at TIPCUP. That's the combination of Timeliness, Interest, Proximity, Consequence, Unusualness and Prominence. Sports stories often hinge on timeliness and prominence, but above all conflict, because sports is a struggle to win after all. Good job serving your readers by choosing a newsworthy sports topic.