

## Sports Journalism Skill Module

### The Feature Story

#### STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Understand the conventions and expectations of the sports feature
- Use your understanding of sports features to brainstorm and write feature stories

#### RESOURCES AND PREPARATION

- *You Try It!* Student Worksheet – The Feature Story: Sports In Depth

#### Additional Online Support:

- [www.holtmcdougal.hmhco.com](http://www.holtmcdougal.hmhco.com)
- [www.BlueNoseEd.com](http://www.BlueNoseEd.com)

### Teach the Skill

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**1. Introduce the Feature Story:** Often people want to know more about sports than can be covered in ordinary sports reporting. They want to know the human angle on a great performance, or to get more acquainted with the personalities of athletes and coaches. Sports features handle this type of in-depth reporting. Tell the students that possible topics for sports features are everywhere. In sports features, the task of the reporter is to go behind the glamour and excitement of sports, and show the untold aspects of competition. Politics, gender relations, family life, hobbies, superstitions, off-the-field problems: in sports features, all these topics are fair game. Tell the students that if they want to write truly creative sports journalism, the sports feature is the type of story for them.

#### 2. Teach the Feature Story:

- Tell the students that there are three main types of sports features. These are:
  1. *The News-Related Sports Feature.* The News-Related Sports Feature goes into greater depth about a sports topic that is *already in the news*. Is the school softball team going to the state tournament? This News-Related Sports Feature will tell the whole story behind the team's success, and what their hopes for a championship might be.
  2. *The Informative Sports Feature.* The Informative Sports Feature reports on *larger trends in sports*. Based on research and relying upon expert opinion, the Informative Feature might use a local event as a springboard, but its main focus will be on the big picture of a topic. For instance, if a local quarterback suffers a concussion, an informative sports feature will use this event to discuss the long-term effects of brain injuries in football. It might also report on rule and equipment changes that would make such injuries less common.
  3. *The Sports Profile/Human Interest Feature.* The Sports Profile focuses on one person (or a small group of people), with the emphasis upon getting to know the subjects of the profile as ordinary people. Using biographical details, interviews, and personal impressions, the Sports Profile lets readers get closer to the people in sports.

#### EXAMPLE

##### Name That Feature!

As an exercise, pass out in class copies of the sports page of the local newspaper, or hand out copies of national sports magazine. Look at all the feature stories. Based upon a quick overview of the features, have the students tell you what type of feature each one is. Is the feature News-Related, Informative, or Human Interest? By learning to recognize the genres of feature writing, students can become more excited about writing their own features.

- What kind of feature to write? Tell the students that one of the most wonderful things about feature writing is the enormous range of topics to write about. To get the students in the habit of brainstorming feature ideas, work through the following exercise in class. Write the table below on the board, and—based upon the provided examples—solicit ideas for each type of feature.

**EXAMPLE**

<b>The Feature Story</b>			
<b>The Basic News</b>	<b>News-Related Feature Ideas</b>	<b>Informative Feature Ideas</b>	<b>Sports Profile/Human Interest Ideas</b>
The high school softball team has won the conference championship, and is going to the state tournament.	1. In-depth review of the softball season. 2. In-depth preview of competition the team will be facing in state tournament. 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____	1. The rising/falling popularity of softball in the local community, the state community, and nationwide. Reasons for this trend. 2. Funding trends in women’s sports. As schools have budget problems, which sports keep their funding? Is there a trend based upon gender? 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____

**3. Apply the Skill:** Hand out copies of the You Try It! Worksheet, “The Feature Story: Sports In Depth.” After reading the directions, have the students get in small groups to work through the exercise. When they are done, reconvene the class and have volunteers from each group report on their work.

**QUICK SKILLS CHECK** Ask students to tell you the main function of sports feature writing. Then have them tell you the three main types of sports features, and the main focus of each type.

# YOU TRY IT!

## The Feature Story: Sports In Depth

### GOAL

Feature stories give sportswriters a chance to break out of the expectations of providing scores and recaps, and have in-depth looks at the trends and personalities in the world of sports. Writing features allow you to show your creative powers, and can give you a real chance to shine in the Blue Nose Sportswriting Contest.

### DIRECTIONS

Get in small groups and look at the sports page of the local newspaper, concentrating on the stories that provide basic sports reporting. Pick five stories and write their titles in the table below. Based upon what you learned from each story, brainstorm as a group until you come up with *at least three* ideas for a feature story (one of each type) that is based upon the basic story.

The Feature Story			
<i>Basic Story</i>	<i>News Related Feature</i>	<i>Informative Feature</i>	<i>Sports Profile/Human Interest</i>
<i>Story 1:</i>	1.	1.	1.
<i>Story 2:</i>	2.	2.	2.
<i>Story 3:</i>	3.	3.	3.
<i>Story 4:</i>	4.	4.	4.
<i>Story 5:</i>	5.	5.	5.

### Self-Check

Look back at the feature ideas you came up with. Are there any local sports stories that you would like to write a feature about? If so, what kind of feature do you have in mind?