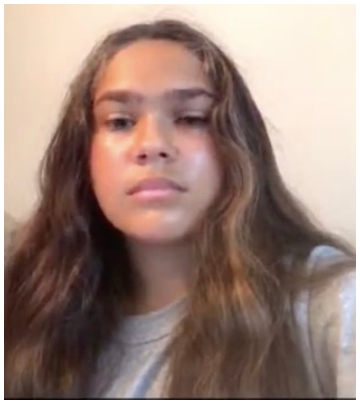
Write on Sports

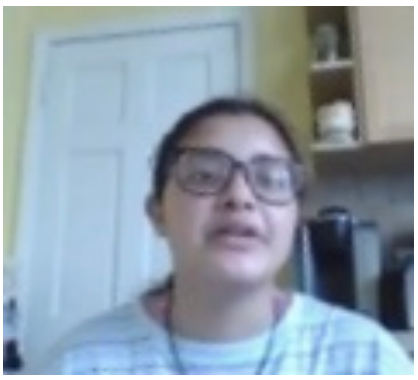
Summer 2020

Student Projects



Write on Sports

Founded by Byron Yake



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Thank You To Our Guests This Summer

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Support for Write on Sports comes from a wonderful array of corporate, foundation and individual donors as well as key partnerships. Educational partners include Clifton Public Schools, Hawthorne Public Schools, Montclair State University, East Orange Public Schools, West Orange Public Schools, Newark Public Schools, St. Benedict's Prep, The New Jersey Devils/Prudential Center. Corporate and foundation supports comes from: Aetna Foundation, Alchemation, Astorino Financial Group, BlackRock, RWJBarnabas Community Foundation, Hyde and Watson Foundation, Heisman Trophy Trust, Investors Bank, MSCI, Inc. Matthijessen, Inc., National Hockey League, New Jersey Devils, New York Giants, New York Jets, George A. Ohl Jr. Trust, Orange Orphan Society, Panasonic Corp, PNC Foundation, PSEG, Lillian Schenck Foundation, Supreme Bakery, Jersey Mikes, NJ. Com, Turrell Fund, Investors Foundation, The Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation and the OceanFirst Foundation.

Dear Friends of Write on Sports,

This is the 15th anniversary of WoS and a memorable year it is. From 10-two-week summer camps in 2019, we were set to add at least four new camps and two or three new after-school programs in 2020. Instead, faced with the challenges of COVID-19, we cancelled all camps and asked ourselves how we could **turn a difficult moment into an opportunity** to improve and grow this special program in which some 2,000 middle school students have already participated.

With volunteer and staff ingenuity and dedication, we did just that by:

- Creating four online programs at Goshen College, Monmouth University, Rhode Island and at our flagship programs in Newark and at Montclair State University, using Zoom, Twitch and Google platforms.
- Inviting students who previously attended camp and wanted to continue working on their sports writing skills. That meant that we added high school students for the first time.
- Developing a mentoring component, so we can help students on their path to college.
- Adding guest event days with students interviewing athletes and sports writers.
- Providing interest areas such as feature stories, fiction, podcasts and video production. Students chose one to focus on and the teachers and interns provided assistance and feedback.

Dr. Erik Jacobson, author of the original curriculum, rewrote it for online use. By developing online program capability, we have flexibility for the future - online, hybrid or in-person. Four Write Sports programs – Monmouth University, Goshen College, Rhode Island and the four flagship camp programs in Newark and at Montclair State University - each held successful online programs for about 90 students.

We do not have a student admission fee and are dependent solely on donor gifts. Each WoS location – Goshen College, Rhode Island (Providence College, Bryant University), Monmouth University (Asbury Park and Long Branch), Roselle Catholic High School, the Oranges, Newark, Clifton and Hawthorne – is successful because of key advocates and donors. We had to cancel the annual Gala, which provides more than a third of our annual revenue. We urge you to check the WoS website and consider contributing. We will greatly appreciate your participation. With your support, we will continue to build Write on Sports, one program at a time, with excellence.

Byron Yake *Founder, Executive Director*

Feature Story

ROTY 2020

By Drew Dawkins

The NBA has restarted in the bubble and the Rookie of the Year (ROTY) award is still unknown. 2nd overall pick Ja Morant, 1st overall pick Zion Williamson, and 21st overall pick Brandon Clarke are in the race. In this race will Ja win or will Zion break Patrick Ewing's record of the least games played to win the ROTY award or will Brandon Clarke, my sleeper pick, make it even more of a contest? 2020 was an exciting year for the ROTY race.

Ja Morant is the favorite to win the 2020 ROTY and ahead of the pack following him. He averages 17.6 points a game, 6.9 assists a game, and 3.5 rebounds for a guard. Former NBA player Richard Jefferson said, "Not much can change right now I think it's still Ja Morant." Ja has been a big leader for Memphis. In the 2018-2019 season the Grizzlies were 12th in the conference now in the 2019-2020 season the Grizzlies are 8th in the conference this means that they are in the playoffs. He and Brandon Clarke are really helping the Grizzlies franchise.

Zion Williamson has only played 19 games and is averaging 23.6 points, 2.2 assists, and 6.8 rebounds a game. He has taken the league by storm with these numbers in only 19 games. In the 2018-2019 season the Pelicans were 13th in conference however in the 2019-2020 season the Pelicans are 10th in the conference and still have a chance to make the playoffs. Zion and the Pelicans still have a chance to make the playoffs. Some people don't believe that Zion has a chance. Former NBA player Richard Jefferson says "Zion is not going to help the Pelicans make the playoffs. This is in a space where you have next to no room for error." This means that if you lose one game or two then your playoff hopes are over. He also said, "Doesn't mean it can't be done, but it will be very difficult."

Brandon Clarke is my sleeper for the award and he has shown that Ja Morant hasn't done it all alone. He averages 12 points, 1.4 assists and 5.8 rebounds a game. Now you might be thinking these numbers are lower than Ja and Zion's but his FG percentage is very good as it's 62.3. This means that in a game he makes most of his shots. In one game he had an 85 FG percentage. Coach Matt Goldsmith said this about the rookie: "He's been around longer so he's contributed more." This means that since Brandon played more games he's helped his team more. The Grizzlies just didn't get better with only Ja, Brandon was also a key factor in Memphis's success. Brandon Clarke is my sleeper ROTY pick.

Time for my opinion out of all the people I listed. I think it should be like this: Zion Willamson, Brandon Clarke, and then in first Ja Morant. The reason I have Zion in third is because since he hasn't played many games he hasn't contributed to the team as much as Ja and Brandon have. I think that all the players have had a big impact on their teams. I just feel that Zion didn't play enough time for him to be the winner of the ROTY. Brandon Clarke is second because of how many games he played and he was very good in the role he was given. He could have been first but was overshadowed by Ja Morant. Ja Morant is number one as many people expected. His flashy plays, IQ, and leadership is what made me vote for Ja Morant as the ROTY.

Feature Story

Serena Williams: A Motivational Story

By Alyssa Frederic

Imagine you are a 15 year old African American girl attending the 2018 US open. You are a huge tennis fan, but an even bigger Serena Williams fan. You see Serena as a role model because she is such a successful woman, even though she might have to face some challenges because of her race and gender.

Serena Williams was not born into a world of respect and fame. Like many other black females, Serena faced hardships all throughout her life. For example, during the women's U.S open in 2018, many Serena Williams fans were outraged because Serena lost a game on multiple accounts that were wrongfully put against her. Of course, like any male or female player, Serena showed that she was angry by throwing her racket on the ground. Soon after the game was aired on national television, there was a cartoon put out that portrayed Serena as a fat, angry black woman, who was stomping on her tiny racket. In the background of the picture, the referee was looking down and pleading to Serena's white opponent for her to let Serena win the game. This is not only disrespectful, demeaning, outrageous and many more adjectives, this was sexist and racist. Imagine if a white man got mad and threw his tennis ratchet on the ground, do you think that somebody would feel the need to draw a disrespectful cartoon about it? Do you think that it would cost him winning the game? In fact, do you even think that he would be throwing the racket for the same reason? The answer to all of those questions is no. Why? Because the world is made of stereotypes and laws that mean that a white man will never have to face the hardships that a black man, a white woman or a black woman will ever have to face. But when we think about it, that is what makes Serena Williams the woman we know and love. That is what makes her the woman that people like you aspire to be.

This is not the only example of sexist and racist acts that were directed as Serena. Back in 2017, on the first of September, Serena had her first baby, Alexis Olympia Ohanian Jr. Serena has had multiple surgeries and complications before so she knew what they felt like. After having her baby, Serena complained of having trouble breathing, and a pain in her chest. The doctors didn't listen and told her that she would be fine. As the symptoms started getting worse, Serena finally insisted and she was scanned for any complications. If she had not done that she probably would have died because it turned out that she was right and had a blood clot in her lungs. This story was huge because it highlighted the problem that black women in this country face when it comes to getting medical attention. Even at her level and fame, Serena

had to demand that she get correct medical attention because nobody was listening to her. This is definitely an example of sexism and racism because it shows how any black woman can be treated in these situations. If these doctors barely listened to Serena Williams, a world class tennis player and winner, what makes you think that they would listen to a regular black female who did not have the same titles as Serena?

After the game was over, the awards were handed out to the trophy for the winner of the match, Naomi Osaka. The crowd booed for the opponent, but when it was Serena's turn to give her speech and thoughts about the game, she said, "Keep your heads high. This is one of many downs but there will be ups." This message would stick with you and every other person in the crowd that has to face challenges because of their background or what they look like. This would tell them that, like Serena, they would have to put up with things that are put against them, but it is up to them to continue on and be successful.

Feature Story

Where are the Kids? - Baseball's Post 1998 Youthification Craze

By Sean Harrington

In 1998, the lives of Ken Griffey Jr., Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa were elevated from those of the normal baseball celebrity, to sports icons. That year, when the weather warmed, the days elongated and kids got out of school, these three superstars changed the game of baseball forever. The summer of '98 would end with history; the 27-year, seemingly unbreakable home run record of Roger Maris was doomed to fall. Not only would it fall, however, it would shatter. These dog days of summer seemed to shimmer bright, seemingly pushing the sport past the '94 lockout. Seemingly. Unfortunately, this season, filled with exciting storylines, pushed the sport to complacency and would later doom Major League Baseball in the long run and force the league to go to desperate measures to regain the perch it reached in Y2K. '98 was special, and it was a season where everything went right, whereas now, nothing can.

1998's three sluggers would all finish the season and their careers engrossed in history, with Griffey best remembered not for that summer (as he was unable to reach Maris' 61 round-trippers), but as one of the best ball players ever, arguably the second best five tool (home run power, batting title hitting, 40 stolen base speed, cannon arm and Gold Glove defense) behind the great Willie Mays, and being eponymously known as 'The Kid.' Even though he wouldn't be in the books that September as the all-time homerun champ, he was the only one of the three to be enshrined in Cooperstown, baseball's Hall of Fame. McGwire, the Golden Haired, bicep bulging SoCal first basemen, who burst onto the power scene even before the beginning of his professional career, shattering home run records at USC, living up to the schools nickname; playing like none other than a trojan. McGwire began his professional career for the Oakland Athletics, garnering notoriety after winning Rookie of the Year, and putting together a consistent all star campaign by his age 34 season in 1998, being by far the oldest of the three players in the pseudo homerun derby that occurred during the season. Finally the, in all senses of the name, formerly unknown Dominican 30-30 threat Sammy Sosa. Sosa, the outfielder who was only an all-star a single time prior to 1998. Sosa came from desperation in San Pedro de Macoris, whereas the only off the island for him was baseball. Sosa states on the ESPN 30-for-30 *Long Gone Summer "*You can't make it to the majors by walking." Sosa came out of nowhere in 1998, and finished the season as the National League MVP. The three superstars became the faces of a sport, packing ballparks, with fans, reporters and viewers witnessing a piece of history each and every day. By the end of

the season, Maris' mark was long forgotten, with McGwire hitting an astonishing 70 home runs, Sosa right behind him with 66, and Griffey with 56. Baseball seemed like it was at a peak that year, with superstars that were not only successful on the field, but lovable off of it. Fans loved the homeruns, the strikeouts, the storylines, and baseball was fun. The Mariners, Cardinals and Cubs were all top 11 in the league for attendance, in fact the Cardinals were in front of the Yankees, Dodgers and Red Sox in that category. Only four years after a lockout nearly purged the sport of respectability, everyone, even non-fans, tuned in to see what would happen that day for the Cardinals, Cubs, Mariners, and of course the "near-perfect" Yankees, in reference to their 114-win mammoth of a season, as Will Leitch mentions. He continues, "I called my dad [the day McGwire hit his 62nd] because it was a moment everybody knew they'd remember forever." Everything went right for baseball that year, and it looked that it would only continue forever. Until it didn't.

"Baseball got arrogant," former Red Sox beat reporter Steve Krasner describes, looking back at the marriage that signaled for a future that wouldn't come to fruition. The post 1998 fall of baseball wasn't swift, nor could it be pinpointed to a signal action. In fact, some of the main reasons for baseball's collapse were from entities with no relation with the sport, and with the MLB's entanglements even reaching the federal, congressional level. There were a multitude of things that looking back, hurt more than healed, but to rattle it down, three significant factors. Those three: the sudden, monstrous explosion of popularity for the National Basketball Association, steroids, and youthification of the game 'we' all know and love.

The year of 1998 was, if not just for the MLB, a gargantuan year for the NBA. This year would be the last year of the Michael Jordan Era in Chicago, Kobe Bryant's first all-star campaign, and the year of the 'Last Dance.' The league, during the '90s, had seen a steady rise from a third-tier league, on par with the NHL or NCAA, to by 2010 being at the same level statistically as the MLB. In 2010, the World Series between the Cinderella San Francisco Giants and the Texas Rangers received a lowly 8.4 million viewers on average according to SMW. On the flip side, the NBA Finals rematch between the Los Angeles Lakers and Boston Celtics received over 18 million average viewers, as per Statistia. Now to be fair, these matchups are unfair in some senses, and the World Series featured mid-market teams versus basketballs two most popular teams. So, looking at a different year with comparable markets, signs point towards 2018. Baseball's two best teams faced off in what was supposed to be a television network's dream. The Boston Red Sox and the Los Angeles Dodgers. League MVP Mookie Betts and the BoSox looked to capture their fourth Commissioner's trophy in 15 years. The Dodgers, hungry after a game 7 defeat in the year's prior championship, were chomping at the bit to reverse their fortunes. Baseball fans gather around, the rating should be through the roof. Well, if the roofs were significantly lower than expected. The average game garnered 8.1 million viewers, only outdone negatively by 2012. While the MLB was seeing little buzz, the

finale in the Warriors-Cavaliers saga played out with masterful numbers. 17.7 million on average watched LeBron James scream at J.R Smith after a game 1 flub, Golden State earn their third title in four years, and James strip the black 'Cavs' jersey from him for the final time. At this point, it was clear basketball was football's sidekick at the sports success perch, with baseball stumbling and falling. This factor had very little to do with baseball itself, but with the NBA's masterful marketing of their superstars, their shrewd business deals, and their ability to skillfully take advantage of shifting demographics.

It is a fact that young sports fans love fast-paced, constant motion sports. Young people are playing soccer, hockey and wrestling at record highs, but none such more than basketball. According to an SFIA statistic, basketball participation from the ages of 6-12 is at over 4.2 million, while baseball is at 3.9 million. For comparison's sake hockey is also significantly growing, with a 10% growth in 2017, baseball only at 3.6%. Basketball is being played more at a younger age, due to the pace of the game and the financial simplicity of it. Second, the superstars of sports like the NBA are being marketed and accessed at a much higher and more successful rate than in baseball. ESPN compiled the Fame 100, a list of the hundred most popular athletes internationally. Mike Trout, baseball's clear best player was not on the list. There was one player on the list, Bryce Harper, the villain who left the Nationals, the team that brought him up, for the money. He only reached 99th. In comparison, there are 9 basketball players on the list, two in the top ten, and even an international player over any baseball player. The NBA simply knows how to market their stars. Players like LeBron, Durant, Curry, Giannis and Dame are all marketed as the best at their sport, and are thrust to the forefront on commercial media, merchandise, and monetary salary. Also, notice how all those players were mentioned mononymously, and they are immediately recognized. If one were to say, Bryce, Mike, Clayton, or Betts, you may know who they are if you follow the sport, but a casual fan will never think Trout in relation to Mike the same way they think of James when they hear LeBron. These players have stories. They are almost like characters in a great novel. Durant is the snake who took the easy way out to win championships and is looking to make a name for himself independent from ring chasing. Stephen Curry is the undersized, skinny guard who burst out of nowhere to revolutionize the sport. LeBron is the hero, the protagonist, the 'Chosen One.' He looks to unseat the greats, and each and every season is an addition to the tale that is basketball. Baseball players do not have that. Those outside of New Jersey won't remember Trout is from Millville, that Cody Bellinger was a LLWS star, or Giancarlo Stanton was almost killed by a pitch to the face. Baseball hasn't created these storylines like they did in 1998, and it is a major reason they simply aren't enticing enough to the random viewer.

The MLB's lack of decisiveness as well as outside elements were no doubt a factor in baseball's beaten path in this millenia, but mistakes internally through scandal was undoubtedly a major part. Baseball

has had its scandals as of late, most notably the sign-stealing scandals of the Astros, Yankees and Red Sox, but no such wrongdoing will match that of steroids. The late 90s and early 2000s (and yes, that includes the '98 season) saw a power surge seemingly out of nowhere. Unfortunately, that 'nowhere' was very planned. Players began using Performance Enhancing Drugs, or steroids, to boost play. A University of Illinois study found that "players' OPS boosted .104 when using HGH [a PED]... earning an average of $12 million more" than the average player. In fact, steroids were so rampant in the sport, 5-70% of MLB players were suspected of using them during their careers during the span of 1991-2003. Additionally, steroids offered financial surplus for the leagues, the cause of which the MLB did not know of at the time. "While franchise values fell during the early 90's, they increased dramatically during the Steroids Era, with the average MLB franchise value rising from $140 million in 1994 to $332 million in 2004" U of Illinois reports. The situation became so bad, in fact, that the league was brought on to a United States Senate hearing in 2003 in which players like Mark McGwire, Sammy Sosa (both of which were obviously previously discussed) and the player who brought the whole scandal to light, Jose Canseco. Thanks to this scandal and these hearings, players like Alex Rodriguez, McGwire, Sosa, Barry Bonds, Roger Clemens, Manny Ramirez and so many more will likely never reach Cooperstown due to their usage, and their legacies will forever be tarnished. No man's legacy, however, was as tarnished as Bonds. The all-time home run leader isn't credited for his successes due to steroid usage late in his career, and even for one of the best to ever do it, he will be locked out of the 'Hall' because of his track record. However, Steve Krasner believes steroids did have some saving grace. "Baseball was fun, it was loud, it was tough." The point was very much true. Steroids, looking back, were the driving force of baseball's revitalization, but ultimately its downfall. In a Bleacher Report feature, it was stated that "what was once known as America's pastime is now known as America's doormat." Baseball's reputation was "tarnished" after this scandal. Fans would never look at the stars of the era the same, and the sport lost monumental amounts of credibility. The home run ball was supposed to be a messiah, instead it became a source of destruction.

Watching sports like the NBA, NFL and NHL market off of their superstars, the MLB looked to do so. Not just that, the sport made a hell-bent goal of theirs to make the game as fast as possible, doing so by making extensive rule changes that completely in some ways, and objectively destroyed the old-fashioned mentality of it. It is almost as if golf enacted a rule where whoever tee'd the ball off the farthest was automatically given an increase on the hole's par. The game is simply so different. The strategy of the pitcher-hitter cat and mouse is gone. Pitchers cannot stay for a single, climatic showdown, rather required to stay for three at-bats minimum. Mound visits that build suspense are limited, and the long-standing "unwritten rules" are no more than part of the history books. Players boast and brag, they are loud and

extravagant, and they don't play the way the game was meant to be played. Baseball is a Gentleman's game, simple as that. The only flash in a game should be what occurs with a diving catch, a perfectly placed breaking pitch, or a home run. There is no screaming, pointing or jumping necessary. Baseball's base, those who stuck around past a lockout, scandal, and controversy, are not causal. Baseball is dominated by regional fans, and as opposed to the NBA and NFL, fans of baseball care more about the team they will root for diehard, rather than putting on a random game and seeing it through. This can be seen in '*Contextualizing MLB's Regional Business Dominance Compared to the NBA'* by Ryan Glasspiegel. In his piece, he demonstrates how city markets and individualized pinpointed markets show local games are far more successful during baseball games rather than national games Local networks thrive off baseball coverage, rather national markets see more financial dividends with a more national sport, the NBA. The NBA rules the national market, but in cities like New York, Chicago and Houston, baseball games dwarf basketball. New York has quadrupled the average viewers in baseball over basketball, and Chicago has triple. To point out, Chicago does have two baseball teams and only one basketball, but each team outdos the Bulls boy wide margins. *Contextualizing* links local audiences to diehard fans, and generally older audiences. Thus, baseball's bread-and-butter with success and marketing should benefit their older audiences, so they can maximize their successes. The only way they can do that is to market baseball's glory days. Hard-nosed teams like the Carlton, Schmidt, Rose Phillies, the early 2000's Yankees and the 90's Braves. These teams didn't rely on braggadocious mannerisms, show-off nature, or disrespect. For instance, Rose was characterized as 'Charlie Hustle,' demonstrative of his play style. The fact of the matter is, baseball will never be as inherently fast-paced or as star-driven as sports like the NBA, and the MLB simply needs to recognize that and market the sport as a team game. Do away with the 'Let the Kids Play' campaign, and market players less for their celebrations and bat-flips, but for pure talent and team impact. Rather than marketing injury-prone Aaron Judge and unlikable players like Bryce Harper, talk about the five-tool talents of Christian Yelich, the constantly under-respected work of Jacob DeGrom, and of course one of possibly the best to ever do it, Mike Trout.

Baseball is at a crossroads; will it choose to sell out what it truly is in order to attempt to hold onto dear life the idea they are America's second most popular sport, or suppress all of the temptation to stay at what it is, a pastime, a gentleman's game, and the greatest sport in the world. Baseball still has potential for growth. It was noted on WEEI, the Red Sox radio broadcast network that baseball was the most popular television program for July 24th, opening day. It garnered over 7.1 million viewers, almost matching the World Series numbers of 2012. The sport is far from dying, but if it continues to isolate the die-hard fan, the game will have no opportunity to grow. An opposing statement surely would state, "how can you grow the

game in the future if you do not target youth?" Simply put, a sport cannot grow for the future if it cannot preserve itself in the present. Baseball is a graceful sport, but if it continues to crave for Youthification in order to appease a generation hapless with patience, then it will never sustain the beauty and art of the sport.

Feature Story

The Name Change

By Elliott Morley

The Washington Football Team currently has three Super Bowl championship wins and 24 postseason appearances. The name “Redskins” had a very negative impact on the franchise ever since it was brought into the NFL because many people felt it was hatred toward the Indigenous people and it made them look like a minority. Many people were boycotting the “Redskins” and held many protests against them. The “Redskins” name is no more and currently, the team will be known as the “Washington Football Team.” A name will be decided in the future. I felt that the name had a huge impact on the NFL community and its followers.

In 1933, Washington got their first national football team from Boston. They decided to change the name from the Braves to the Redskins to “honor” the Native American tribes. When they were deciding to change the name a news article quoted team founder George Marshall saying that he named the team after specifically for their coach William Dietz, who was Native American, but it was for the other Native American players on the team at that time. Coach George Allen sat down and talked with the Red Cloud Indian Fund on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation to design and finalize their new logo. The logo for the new team was created by a Native American Walter “Blackie” Weltzel to show a member of the Blackfeet Tribe. After the logo was released many of the members of the Blackfeet tribe were offended by it. They felt that it was very stereotypical of the designers to make the logo the way it was. They also felt that it brought back the history of the Natives when they were exiled out of the land by the colonial people who forced them to move out west.

Indigenous groups have asked the Washington team to change the name for the past 40 years. In 2014, a demonstration with many Native Americans and others was held outside TCF Bank Stadium in Minnesota before a game against the Vikings. Now in 2020 there have been many social justice conflicts happening in America that have to do with equality for all. On May 25, George Floyd was murdered by the Minneapolis Police because one of the officers put his knee on Floyd’s neck for about 8 minutes until he tragically passed away. This sparked outrage throughout America and spread to the other countries and they held protests to support the Black Lives Matter movement. This movement had a great impact on groups other than the community and it has connected to the Indigenous groups.

Many companies have been attacked and pressured by society to change the names and logos of different sports teams. Not only did the Washington Team's sponsors have pressure but many other companies such as Blue-Emu and SunTrust that sponsor the baseball teams such as the Cleveland Indians and the Atlanta Braves have been pressured to change their name now. Those companies that promote and support them have been getting pressure from the civil rights groups to change them and also to drop their contract with the teams.

The name should've been dropped many years earlier but in the present time, it is right to change the name because of all the pressure the sponsors of the team have been receiving. The Black Lives Matter movement sparked change throughout the whole world and it has affected more sports teams and I am glad that they are in the process of change.

Feature Story

Black Lives Matter in the NBA!

By Hashim Muhammad

Mike Brown, Trayvon Martin, George Floyd. Those are just a few names of the people who fell victim to police brutality. While they are resting in peace, their killers are still alive and breathing. Darren Wilson (Trayvon's killer) and George Zimmerman (Mike's killer) are still roaming the streets till this day, while Derek Chauvin (George's killer) sits up in a jail cell. Police have constantly oppressed the African-Americans for years and nothing has been done. Well, I say no more! During the year 2020 the #BLM movement has been stronger than any other time in history after the brutal killing of Minnesota's George Floyd.

Recently, the NBA has announced the season will return and players will be allowed to wear messages on their shirts to show their support for the movement. But, that stirs up a question: Will the NBA coming back take attention away from the #BLM movement?

Many NBA players have come out to say that they support the #BLM movement, but actions speak louder than words. Players like Patty Mills, LeBron James, etc, are all donating to racial justice charities. It goes to the extent that Patty Mills is even giving Every Cent. Mills said in an interview, "Old white teammates and coaches, haven't felt comfortable asking me, as a Black Australian, about racism before, which speaks to the impact and value of the Black Lives Matter movement and the millions who have participated in protests around the world". According to the article, "NBA Player to Donate 'Every Cent' of His Salary to Social Justice Issues", Patty Mills was inspired to take social action on this matter after the tragic death of George Floyd, though Patty Mills has always been a huge supporter of justice for all races. LeBron James has also contributed to the matter. In the article, "How Lebron James a leading voice for social justice in a racially divided nation," it states, "The Los Angeles Lakers superstar has used his platform to speak out on political and social issues and recently helped form 'More Than a Vote,' a group dedicated to mobilizing African American voters and fighting voter suppression. The organization was created in response to the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police on May 25, which touched off more than three weeks of global protests for social justice." LeBron has always been one to go an extra mile and he did just that with helping create this organization. Though LeBron has helped create an organization for the movement, his main competition for the status of 'GOAT' aka Micheal Jordan also made contributions to the

movement. Michael Jordan plans to donate $10 million a year for the next 10 years toward social justice organizations. The NBA has been a huge help towards the movement and I hope it continues.

Although the NBA has done a great job with helping the movement there have also been players who have been sort of a distraction to the movement and also think that the season returning will get in the way of the movement. One of those players is Kyrie Irving. Though Irving has marched with protestors and has come out and said he supports the movement, some of his fellow peers such as Austin Rivers and Kendrick Perkins have come out and stood against him. Perkins said, “For the last two days, we have been talking about Kyrie Irving. So Kyrie Irving, right now you are the distraction. You are the distractor. You are distracting the whole situation," Perkins said on ESPN's, *Get Up!* Perkins called into question Irving's leadership after the guard, who serves as vice president of the National Basketball Players Association executive committee, opposed the NBA's restart plan. "It's crazy to me because you come out and you do something simply without talking to (NBPA) president Chris Paul or consulting (executive director) Michele Roberts and go off and do something totally different and get a group of guys together and say, 'Let's sit out without a plan.' It makes zero sense and I totally disagree." Perkins was directing his anger to Kyrie and Avery Bradley making a group to help get more black executives and coaches into the NBA without consulting the NBPA president Chris Paul. Austin Rivers came out and said on Twitter, “The group Kyrie has formed is admirable and inspiring. I’m with it … but not at the cost of the whole NBA and players’ careers. We can do both. We can play and we can help change the way black lives are lived. I think we have to! But canceling and boycotting a return doesn’t do that in my opinion. Guys want to play and provide and help change!!!!” During this pandemic Kyrie has made some questionable actions, but over the last few days Kyrie has made a generous donation. As of late, Kyrie has helped the WNBA by donating to help promote the WNBA and gender equality in the sport of basketball. The Brooklyn Nets star is committing $1.5 million to players that opted out of the 2020 season because of COVID-19 concerns or due to wanting to create awareness for social justice.

Though Kyrie is one of my favorite players and has done a lot to help the cause, I have to disagree with him on this matter. I think the NBA will find a way to incorporate the movement even more than just the messages on the jerseys. Matt Goldsmith, basketball coach of The College of New Jersey agrees with me saying this, “I do think that it will take media focus from the #BLM movement, but at the same time with that focused eye on the NBA it will help the #BLM movement to become more relevant and get more eyes on it. I think if the NBA uses their cards right they will be able to help the the #BLM movement become more popular.” Richard Jefferson, retired NBA player, also agrees with me stating this, “In my opinion all of these players that are using their platform to get the word out and all the players having #BLM on the back of

their jerseys will help the movement even more. I think this is an opportunity to continue to make our country better. It is really helping our country to become better for everyone." So as you can see the NBA can help in more ways than one.

In my opinion, the NBA will be able to help the movement and players shouldn't be against it. We all have to do our part to make our country better and this is the first step forward. Other leagues should follow in the NBA's footsteps and find a way to incorporate the movement into their league. This way we can get the word out to more people and hopefully finally get justice.

Feature Story

Obscure National and Historical Sports

By Owen Radigan

Have you ever wondered about other countries' cultures and how they influence things like sports? I have wondered that and I will be exploring how obscure national and historical sports influence cultures. One may ask: what makes a sport obscure? Well, an obscure sport is a different, not as well known or played sport, when compared to other sports in American eyes. Some commonly played sports are baseball, soccer, and hockey. The obscure sports I will be analyzing today are oil wrestling, sepak takraw, and capoeira.

One obscure sport, oil wrestling, is the national sport of Turkey. This national sport consists of players coating themselves in olive oil as they engage in wrestling. The participants wear leather pants called “Kispet" which is made from buffalo leather. The sport’s most famous tournament “Kırkpınar" is held in Edrine during the summer. The winner of the tournament is called "bas pehlivan". This sport might sound strange to us, but it is very important to the history of Turkey. The history of oil wrestling starts with two leaders from the Ottoman Dynasty named Orhan Gazi and his brother Süleiman Pasha. They were capturing forts and then they started to jokingly wrestle in oil. They agreed that the winner would get Kispet, but unfortunately they died because of wrestling. Years later after their deaths, the sport of oil wrestling became recognized as a tradition. This is important to the culture of Turkey because it represents a sign of masculinity, which was something that is praised in Turkey. Oil wrestling shows masculinity because of the struggle, strength, courge, and determination it provokes. The Kirkpinar tournament connects Turkey’s history and culture as stated by one of the top players Ahmet Taşcı, “For oil wrestlers, Kırkpınar is like a dream,” Ahmet Taşcı is explaining how Kirkpinar is a goal for many oil wrestlers. As one can conclude, the history and culture of oil wrestling are very rich.

Aside from oil wrestling being an obscure sport, sepak takraw is also known as an obscure sport. Sepak takraw is currently Malaysia’s national sport. Sepak takraw is like volleyball but players are only allowed to use their heads, chests, knees, and legs. This sport originated in Malaysia and is played with a rattan or synthetic ball. In the 1940’s it spread to Southeast Asia and its first official game was held in 1945. The term sepak in Malay is kick and takraw in Thai is the word from the woven ball. International play is governed by ISTAF (International Sepak Takraw Federation) which holds world cups and king cups championships every year. This Malaysian sport started about 500 years ago and was mostly played by the

royal court. In the 16th century, the sport spread to Indonesia and people there called it Sepak Raga. An early account from the fifteenth century about this sport is how Tun Besar took Raja Muhammad's headgear off by hitting him in the head with a rattan ball, resulting in Tun Besar being stabbed to death by Raja Muhammad. This story is a huge part of Malaysian culture because it shows how back then players wanted to earn revenge, but today players want to earn an award.

This final obscure sport is called capoeira, which is also known as Brazilian dance fighting. Capoeira isn't the national sport of Brazil but is very important to the history of Brazil. This sport is a form of martial arts with dancing. Capoeira in the past years has spread around the world and has been in pop culture. This is practiced in a circle formation called roda, where capoeiristas perform capoeira. They also use certain instruments like the berimbau, the pandeiro, and the atabaque. The tempo of the instruments influences the speed of the roda. The members of the roda also sing. All of the music is connected to African heritage. Capoeira was created 500 years ago by enslaved Africans in Brazil. To be safe and discrete, they practiced capoeira to protect themselves, which looked like dancing to the slaveholders. After practicing for many years people used capoeira to rebel against their slaveholders. This sport is important to the culture of Brazil and the Afro-Brazilian community because it connects two different groups of people. Since it connects two different groups of people, it stops hatred and racism against a group. Capoeira helps people from all parts of life get out of struggles. A quote capoeirista performer Nestor: "Life is a struggle? Life is a battle? The player sees that capoeira is teaching him to dance within and during this fight." Capoeira shows how people created enjoyment while enduring pain.

These three examples of national sports are all considered obscure (in our eyes) but they have a cultural impact. Sports are a great way to learn about different cultures in the world. These sports portray the history of that region. For instance, capoeira shows the history of slavery and of Brazil, oil wrestling shows the importance masculinity in Turkey, and sepak takraw shows the history of sports in Malaysia. As one can see, sports play a key role in presenting a country's culture.

Feature Story

The NWHL Takes a Stand

By Abby Rios

The National Women's Hockey League (NWHL) players are tired of the unfair treatment towards them. They want to have the benefits and same wages as the male players of the NHL. The NWHL was founded in 2015 and started to attract some of the greatest female hockey players from around the world. With the maximum spending budget being only $2.5 million, the players aren't able to be paid nearly as much as they deserve which eventually led to the boycott starting in May of 2019. There have been multiple teams in NWHL that have chosen to "sit out" of the next season in protest. Even players from the Canadian Women's Hockey League (CWHL), which folded after only 12 seasons in March of 2019, joined the protest. With all of this it becomes apparent that both Canadian and American female hockey players will stand together for equality.

After the folding of the CWHL earlier in the year due to lack of funding, players from both leagues released a new statement in May, joining together with the hashtag #ForTheGame. The players in NWHL want a league that offers its players sufficient resources. A statement from the Professional Women's Hockey Players Association said this, "There is currently not a league that consistently showcases the best product of women's hockey in the world, pays its players a living wage, and has the infrastructure to set the game up to succeed. Such a league would represent an important step in closing the dream gap between young boys and girls."

One major inequality was the pay. Surviving off of professional hockey alone in North America is hard. The league tweeted that some of the league veterans and the top skilled players signed contracts for $15,000 in 2019, paying them for games, practices and possibly a few playoff games. The salary caps for the teams which carry between 20 and 22 players is only $100,000-$150,000 whereas the lowest paying NHL team's payroll is $260,515,726. Boston Pride player Jillian Dempsey who is the first NWHL player to reach 100 points and was also named an All-Star in 2019, has a full-time teaching job. Emma Ruggerio, who plays for Buffalo works as a waitress at IHOP. Dempsey said this about the pay difference in an interview for *The Athletic*, "Having a league in which you can play competitively is something we're all so grateful for. Of course, you want to see many things improve. It's hard to be patient sometimes, You see what our male counterparts have, and it's like, 'Oh, if only we were getting that $800,000 as a rookie.' You see what the

male players make, even at the lower end of the money in male pro sports. It's crazy. Like basketball. What do they even do with that? Of course, we see that and we want that." This shows that even the newest players in the NHL still get paid more than players in the NWHL even if the female players have played for years.

When the NWHL was invited to the NHL's 2019 All-Star event, the women received great responses from the crowd. It would be interesting to see if the NWHL was included in more of the NHL's events if they would get more recognition. This may lead to more fans which will eventually lead to more money for the league. Another possibility is for the NHL to financially assist the NWHL in a similar way to how the NBA subsidizes the WNBA.

As a young female and an avid hockey fan, I would like to see the women in hockey get the same recognition and compensation as men who play the same sport. I admire the women of the NWHL for taking this stand even if it means not playing the game that they love professionally. I hope that their sacrifice will lead to improvements in their treatment and will bring them back on the ice where they belong.

Feature Story

"We want to be heard and we want it to stop!"

By Madisyn Rivera-Gonzalez

Do you guys think Black Lives Matter? Or any people of color? I know that they completely matter, so what I don't get is why people are being racist to people because of the way they look. Their looks shouldn't be your priority in life, and your priority shouldn't be to make them feel bad about themselves. Your priority should be to focus on yourself and where you want to go in life. Right now times aren't the best, but people are done with the disrespect they were getting. They were so upset, angry and determined that they wanted to put their final stamp down.

People are so upset at each other because of what they caused. They have caused others to feel bad about themselves and think the worst about themselves just because of how they look and what race they are. I mean I would be furious if people were mean and discriminating against me or anybody.

Anger is a good state to be in right about now. It is a good state because a cop just killed a man named George Floyd while he was in custody. The cop had his knee in his neck and George Floyd was saying he couldn't breathe, but the cop didn't listen. So now the people are scared and don't think the cops are doing a good job of being cops. People have started protesting, but the cops see it in a different way. They see it as rioting so they have used lethal weapons such as whips and batons and have been hurting the people.

Since the President and the Government weren't listening to what people have to say, the world demanded they do something about racism. The people started putting together protests all over the country and have been destroying stores and other places just to get their point across. The people were really determined to get what they wanted or what they deserved, and what they deserved was for people to stop calling them names, telling where they can sit, what they can and can't do. All people of color want in life is to be treated the same as others.

You know, I'm very optimistic that these riots/protests will change behavior towards people of color. A lot of people are protesting everywhere all over the state and country and I think that if other people took the time to really think about what's going on and listen to what the protestors have to say they would reconsider some things. On the other hand, I'm also pessimistic because I think even if the President, the Government, or even us people do anything or make a law, there will always be people who don't care and

keep doing what they were doing before. I mean if they didn't listen or stop slavery back in 1619 they are most likely thinking why stop doing it now. Back in 1619 it was enslavement of Africans, brought to North America. Slavery was abolished in the United States in December 18, 1865 but racism still continued to be the problem and still is.

In conclusion, I feel that people need to stand up for whatever they believe in and to never let anyone push them around. If you feel furious or angry then let it all out and express how you feel. Trust me, the only thing that will help you feel better is fighting back. Telling the people what you think is like a big weight just lifted off your shoulders. That feeling is so amazing. All of you are beautiful, no matter what color or race you are, and don't let anybody say anything different.

Feature Story

Is It All In the Goaltending?
An Explanation of the New Jersey Devils' Recent Struggles

By Grace Romano

Any hardcore NJ Devils fan knows that the Devils have won the Stanley Cup three times, but they've been to more playoff seasons as a losing team than a winning team. The Devil's recent struggle is that they can't seem to get in or stay in the playoffs. But what factors could have impacted that? Evaluating the stats of the team is a good way to find out. A big part of the Devils in the past has been goaltending. Martin Brodeur was one of the best goalies in NHL history, let alone the best goalie in Devils' history. Brodeur's legacy was followed by Corey Schnieder, Keith Kinkaid, and then Mackenzie Blackwood (the Devils' current goalie). The Devils have struggled as a team ever since Martin Brodeur left as goalie.

Brodeur played 21 seasons with the Devils. Compared to the goalies that followed him, Brodeur's stats are, to no surprise, much better. Brodeur led the Devils to five Stanley Cup Finals, winning three times. He also led the team to the playoffs seventeen times out of his twenty-one seasons played. The last time Brodeur took the Devils to the playoffs was 2012, also the last year they went to the Cup Finals, but the game against the LA Kings was a complete joke. Early in the first period of game six, a major penalty was called against the Devils, giving the LA Kings a power play. By the time the penalty was over, the Kings had scored three times and the score was 3-0. The penalty never should have been major, it should have been a minor penalty, giving the Devils a chance for a short penalty kill and the Kings wouldn't have scored three times. If this penalty wasn't called as a major the Devils probably would have had a better shot at a fourth Cup.

Schneider has taken the team to the playoffs once in 2017-18 with Kinkaid as his backup goalie. They didn't do very well that time. Although he's been in the Devils' system for five years, Blackwood has only played for the Devils for two seasons. While very early in his career, he's showing promising signs of improvement, giving Devils fans hope for the future. Schneider's first three seasons with the Devils were very good, but his last four seasons have shown a decline in his stats. His goals against average has gotten worse season after season. In the 2017-18 season, his GAA was 2.93. The season after that, it went up to a 3.06 and then up to a 3.53. Fans are hopeful that he will overcome this sudden decline and rehab his playing to help the team. Kinkaid, while playing only for a short period of time with the Devils, showed promise but

struggled enough that the Devils gave up on him. For example, his GAA with the Devils was increasing more and more with each season. The first year he played with the Devils, his GAA was 2.23, which isn't terrible, but as he went along, it increased to a 3.36. He now plays for the Montreal Canadiens, and his GAA with them has gone up drastically to a 4.24. Mackenzie Blackwood, the Devils current goalie, has shown some improvement in his playing. His GAA is a bit high, in his first season being a 2.61 and then going up to a 2.77 in his second season. But he seems to be playing more games and showing improvement, which is giving the fanbase hope that he'll be a promising goalie for the Devils in the years coming. The inconsistent play of the Devils goaltenders, while not the only reason for their struggles, I believe is the primary reason for their lack of success since Brodeur's departure.

Goalies are a big part of a hockey team. Brodeur obviously had a positive effect on the Devils during the years he played with them. Meanwhile, Schnieder, Kinkaid, and Blackwood, while playing well at times, have failed to take the team to a title. But, their failure to obtain a title in the NHL wasn't just on the goalies. Their bad play was an effect of the entire team not playing well. They not only were unsuccessful in scoring goals, but their defense wasn't on point as well. The playing wasn't the only factor messing up their success rate. Coaching changes also can confuse a team. When they change a coach, the entire system of managing the team is changed. The team could be playing a strong defense, but the new coach could want them to be more of an offensive team. This could mess up the way the goalie is playing with the team, therefore throwing them off and not playing as well for a while.

The Devils have struggled as a team since Brodeur left as their goalie, but their current goalies are showing some promising improvements for the Devils' future. Blackwood and Schneider seem to be rehabbing their playing skills for the next season. The fanbase is hopeful that they'll be able to take the Devils back into a good playing system and have the skills to take them into the playoffs soon. Obviously, no Devils goalie can live up to Brodeur's legacy, but if Blackwood and Schneider can get the Devils at least into the playoffs, the future of New Jersey Devils goaltending could be looking up.

Feature Story

Across Decades: Who's the Best

By Franklin Smith-Fullwood

In every sport there is a common debate. Who is the G.O.A.T? In football you have Brady and Montana. In basketball you have LeBron and MJ. In baseball you have Bonds and Ruth. I'm going to attempt to effectively compare players across generations. However, goals and assists don't tell the whole story when comparing players across generations. So to compare these players I used more than points, instead I also used analytics and adjusted scoring.

Howie Morenz was the original G.O.A.T of hockey as he was the best player of the 20s then making him the first to break all sorts of records and then you have Patrick Kane, the 2007 1st overall pick and the greatest American in NHL history. Howie Morenz vs Patrick Kane. Morenz was the first in league history to score 50 points and 40 goals. He would average 56 goals per 82 games played and probably more considering how much more grittier the game was and how different the rules were. For example, Morenz shattered records in the 20s even though the forward pass wasn't even a thing until the 1929-1930 season! He also won a Hart Trophy (MVP) and two Stanley Cups. Patrick Kane is the most prolific scorer of the decade with 792 points. So far in his career he has won a Hart Trophy and three Stanley Cups just in the 2010s. Each player owns a spectacular resume. Even without rules and analytics factored in you can see Morenz is better. Per 82 games he averaged 56 goals per season and Kane averages 31. But with analytics such as point shares and adjusted points Morenz also beats out Kane. Simply put, Morenz is a better player than Kane but never got to put up the same stats because the era he played in the seasons were shorter and the rules were different.

These players play a very similar brand of hockey. Goals, goals, and even more goals. In fact, the award for the most goals in a season is called the Maurice "Rocket" Richard Trophy. So this comparison will be between the award's namesake and the nine-time winner. Maurice "Rocket" Richard vs Alexander Ovechkin. One difference is icing was permitted which allowed there to be less premium shots. Without icing causing a neutral zone faceoff like it does today it was allowed other teams could get a fresh unit on the ice and prevent scoring chances versus a tired unit. Richard in his career won a Hart Trophy and two Stanley Cups. Ovechkin has won three Hart Trophies and one Stanley Cup. Now let's move on to the stats Ovechkin and Richard both average 50 goals a season. Ovechkin has 706 career goals over a 15 year career. If Richard

played a 82 game season like we do today he would've amassed 700 goals and Ovechkin would be the 9th player in NHL history to score 700 goals. Both are prolific goal scorers but let's move on to analytics. Point shares show how much a player contributes to his team. Through an 18 year career Richard has a 105.3 in point shares. However, in only 15 years Ovechkin has a 145.7 percent in point shares. Clearly, Ovechkin was more valuable thus the Hart Trophies. Overall, Alex Ovechkin is better accolade wise, stats wise they're even, but he is also better analytics wise.

For my final comparison I will use two players that are in the top five for all scoring categories even though their primes were 20 years apart: Gordie Howe vs Wayne Gretzky. Gretzky wore 99 in honor of Gordie Howe, his childhood idol. These are two of the greatest to ever do it. When Gretzky played, two huge rule changes were implemented. A five-minute sudden death overtime allowed there to be a chunk more of hockey for Gretzky to score. Also, the high sticking penalty was adjusted so you could score goals while lifting the puck which influenced scoring. Gretzky has nine Hart Trophies and four Stanley Cups. Howe has six Hart Trophies and four Stanley Cups. Howe averaged 38 goals a season and scored 804 career goals compared to Gretzky's 894. Both of these players were incredibly valuable to their respective franchises. Howe had 186.6 percent of point shares amassed in a 26 year span. Gretzky had 223.3 career point shares. All in all these players dominated their eras and were the best to do it. Gretzky is the better player though.

In conclusion, you can evaluate players from different generations as long as you weigh all the factors. Points, analytics, adjusted points, and the rule changes to account for some point gaps. Sometimes you will see a player from the 20s (Morenz) can be much better than a modern player (Kane). Or a modern all time great (Ovechkin) be better than a hockey legend (Richard). And when you compare two of the best (Gretzky and Howe) one will always be better than the other.

Spot Story

Covid 19 and the Impact on the Sports World

By Penelope Fleming

Covid 19 has affected the lives of nearly everyone across the globe. So much has changed in a matter of months. And though it is certainly not among the most pressing of these issues, nonetheless an area that has been significantly impacted and touches so many, is athletics. Virtually overnight, the sports world has come to a screeching halt, and there is still so much uncertainty and worry in the air as we move through this global pandemic. What will the return of competitive sports look like? When will that happen? How will they keep everyone safe? How will the players adapt to a new style of gameplay? The future for athletes and everyone in the sports industry remains unclear.

On Wednesday July 8th, Dr. Erik Jacobson ("Dr. J") of Write On Sports conducted an interview featuring New Jersey Devils goaltender, Mackenzie Blackwood, and NHL Network broadcaster, Jamie Hersch. During the interview, they discussed the effect of the coronavirus pandemic in relation to the NHL and their own careers.

Dr. J asked Jamie Hersch what this shift has been like for her, considering she has gone from covering professional hockey games nightly, to months on end without the sport to base her career around. "It was sad, bizarre, and crazy at first- but after about a month the network switched to online shows which was definitely a tricky transition." So even your favorite journalists have been struggling in this new age of coronavirus, but there is a bright side. She continued, "It's also been really fun in some ways because we've gotten to connect to the viewers on a whole new level and certainly to the players we have on our shows because we can come together through relating and laughing about how our jobs are now being done from our couch, living room, or wherever." Negative situations do have silver linings! Jamie also added that she has learned how much we all have in common, stopping and taking a minute to think about others (safety-wise) and priorities in life.

Mackenzie Blackwood discussed the return of NHL hockey, joking about how different it will be, most likely playing without fans in the stands the next time he gets back on the ice. "A few curse words are definitely thrown around amongst players in the heat of the competition." This type of banter between players that is usually muffled by the noise of the crowd will now be fully audible - there's a change we'll all have to get used to! Mackenzie Blackwood stepped aside from the topic of his NHL career and talked about his

personal life, saying he's learned the importance of keeping in contact with others, staying calm, and staying positive.

And though they both admitted to missing hockey, Mackenzie and Jamie agreed that it's important not to rush things. As eager as we are to return to fields, arenas, and courts- the safety of the sports community (players, coaches, fans, and staff) takes precedence over our love for the game. In time we'll get there. Patience is key, and with everyone's cooperation we'll be back in no time- same with our other everyday social activities. We're all feeling uneasy right now in these times of crisis, but it was great to hear the perspectives of these impressive hockey professionals. It left me feeling more optimistic about the situation and even more excited for the return of professional sports, whenever that may be.

Fiction

The Simple Things

By Katelyn Fallon

My name is Kayla Fisher. Softball has always been my thing. Every coach I had as a kid said I had "raw talent." The phrase always confused me but I figured it was a good thing because it made my mom smile. I've worked so hard throughout my career so far to get to where I am and I will continue to work even harder to get to where I want to be. My friends always got mad at me for missing social events like birthday parties and sleepovers. They didn't understand my love for a sport and my ambition to be the best version of myself as a player. Some people even unfriended me because of it. I sacrifice these things because someday I hope to play at the collegiate level. That's my long term goal, but obviously there will be some highs and lows along the way.

During my 8th grade year I played town travel. It was coached by some girls' parents. These girls got a lot more playing time because of this. For me, I was playing for fun, yet I was one of the best players on the team. I was confused because I also played on a club team, took private softball lessons, and constantly proved myself but I still wasn't given a fair opportunity. The head coach's daughter batted 3rd and didn't get a single hit all season but never dropped in the line-up. I only struck out once all season and most of the rest of my at bats were hits and walks including home runs and triples. None of this mattered. I was still batting 10th. This was discouraging because I knew I was good. I was losing confidence because I wasn't getting the playing time I deserved on a town team. The only reason I was still feeling good about myself was because in club where games are more competitive and my team was really good, I was playing a lot and really well. The town team was also really cliquey, there were friend groups that would leave people out during the games. I was friendly with girls, but none of them were my friends. I felt left out because I was one of the only girls not in their group.

One game it was a summer night game under the lights. I sat the bench the first few innings and batted 9th. It was hard to sit there watching my teammates losing our game and not being able to do anything to help. All of the sudden my coach looks at me and says, "you're going in to pitch." I stood up, grabbed my glove, and walked out onto the field. There was a part of me so happy to be pitching. The other part of me was upset and frustrated that I was being used as an afterthought. They didn't even bother to warm me up before putting me in, I felt like I was being set up to fail. I decided to smile and just do my best and work

with what I've got. I threw some pitches to warm up on the mound mid-inning, 5 to be exact. 1 change up right down the middle, 2 screwballs on the inside corner of the plate, 1 fastball up in the zone, 1 drop ball down in the zone, and one curveball that swept the outside corner. I felt ready, regardless of not getting a warm up before the game or before being put on the mound. The umpire came up to me and said, "you got two outs, batters on first, second, and third." I nodded and said, "Thank you!" The batter walked up to the plate, tapped it twice with her bat and got set waiting for the pitch, I threw her 2 fastballs she watched both go past her, I then threw her a drop ball and she swung right over it. I smiled as I walked into the dugout. It may have only been one batter but I was happy I did as well as I did with no preparation to go into pitch. I went back in the next inning and it was a 3 up, 3 down. A 1,2,3 inning. Once again I smiled as I walked off. The game was over, we still lost but I still pitched really well. My coach said nothing to me. I didn't need the validation but he gave it to everyone else. Why was I any different?

The next game I was back on the bench. I asked my coach if I was gonna pitch or play any innings at first base. He looked at me and said, "I see you as more of a hitter, you should focus on that." I laughed and responded, "Did I do something to never be put in the field?" He responded, "You've never proven yourself to me, the girls in the field have." I was so confused. Every single opportunity I've gotten, and there haven't been a lot of those, I've done really well. I never gave him a reason to doubt me. Our record as a team with me on the bench was also 0-6. So I'm wondering why he kept doing the same thing every game expecting a different result. I'm pretty sure my dad says that's the definition of stupidity. I was tired of not getting a fair opportunity because there were plenty of coaches that would believe in me and give me the opportunities to become better instead of making me feel like I wasn't good enough and make me lose my confidence.

When it was time to pick high schools I couldn't decide. I could go to the one in my town where all my friends are going but I knew I wanted a new opportunity. I applied to 3 private schools and applied for a technical school. When I saw I got into all of them my decision was even tougher. After weighing the pros and cons of each one I realized where I belonged. I went against private school because all-girls is boring, I hate skirts, and It would be too strict of an environment. When thinking about my hometown's high school I realized I'd be around the same people that I had been around for the last 9 years for another 4 years and I didn't think I could handle that, I also knew that within the small town environment I wouldn't get a fair opportunity in softball because my parents wouldn't be best friends with the coach like some girls' parents were. When I visited the technical school I felt at home. It was huge and kind of intimidating, but It looked so awesome and like a challenge I wanted to take on. I accepted my offer for Tech.

I walked into tryouts. It was a whole new environment. The girls were nice, the coaches were nice, something I was not used to yet. The head coach, Coach Cooper, walked up to me and said he was excited to

have me here. I smiled and said I was happy to be there. He watched me pitch and told me I was very talented and he couldn't wait for the season to start. When the whole tryout was over he walked up to me and said, "see you tomorrow?" I smiled and said "Yes, I can't wait." The practice tomorrow was for girls competing for varsity spots. I went home and got really happy because I was finally getting the opportunity I've worked for. The next day at practice I was taking some reps at first base, Coach Cooper came up to me and told me, "I want you to make sure you watch and see where the ball is going before you stretch for it, this will make it easier to make plays." I was really happy to be criticized because it wasn't in a degrading way. I didn't get this type of positive advice from my other coach.

A few weeks later it was our first varsity game. I warmed up to pitch before the game started but the upperclassmen obviously got the start, she deserved it. Right before the fourth inning he called me over and said I was going in to pitch. I was excited for the opportunity but nervous that I would mess it up. I stood out on the field with the ball in my hand feeling the seams and I smiled because this was the moment I had been waiting for. Knowing he believed in me enough to have me pitch at the varsity level gave me the confidence I needed to have faith in my pitching. I saw the first batter walk up to the plate. She looked intimidating, she was tall and obviously very strong. I knew this wouldn't be an easy at bat but I also knew I could do it. I threw her a screwball that was near her hands and she couldn't get around on it. She popped up to the first baseman. That was one out. Only two more to go. I threw the next batter 2 fastballs and one was a strike and the other was a ball. I heard the umpire shout out, "one and one." The next pitch I threw a curve ball and she swung and grounded out to second base. That was two. I kept telling myself "only one more" this helped me because I knew I was ⅔ of the way there. The next batter walked up and hit a single up the middle off of my fastball. I felt overwhelmed for a minute but took a deep breath and just thought about the next batter not the last one. The next girl walked up and smiled at me and I smiled back, I threw her a curve ball and a changeup both for strikes and she watched them go past her. I then threw her a rise ball and she swung under it. My rise ball is my newest pitch that I had been developing over the past year. That was the first time I used it in a game, I was really happy that it was effective. It was my first time pitching and striking a girl out at the varsity level and that made me so excited for my future at varsity because I now knew what I was capable of. Coach Cooper looked at me after the game and said, "Awesome job, Kayla". Just that simple praise made me feel amazing. It also made me feel like I made the right choice and my hard work was finally paying off.

Fiction

Blood, Sweat and Tears (Part 1)

By Noah Freeman

The sun was big and bright outside as James biked down to practice. “Yo, James,” a voice yelled. James turned around. “What up, Christian?” James sneered.

Christian biked in front of him blocking his way. “My coach said I've been invited to a Chelsea tryout.” James's heart plunged. “There's one more spot though,” Christian said chuckling. “My trainer said so and I doubt you're earning it,” Christian sneered then biked away.

“I’ll show you what I can do,” James snarled under his breath as he pulled into practice. "James hurry up and get running," his coach said.

"I just got here, lemme stretch," James said.

"Chelsea doesn't accept lazy people, you know that," his coach remarked. “Now come on I got a surprise for the team.”

James took off running onto the field. "Slow, down," a voice called out.

"Monty!" James cried out. "You here for tryouts?" James questioned.

"Yes, picklehead, for the last spot on the Chelsea team," Monty said ruffling James' dirty hair. "Now you got to hurry up," Monty said. James smiled and picked up his pace. "James look!" Monty whispered. "There's the trainer for the tryouts." He pointed at a middle-aged white guy with scruffs of white in his beard.

"Look at that beer belly," James scuffed. "And look at those shoes."

"Christian?" James said. Monty quickly switched into a fighting stance.

"Loosen up, Monty," Christian said. "You wouldn't want your mom to get mad," Christian smirked. Monty launched at Christian. " Too slow, poor boy," Christian laughed and ran off.

"Calm down. He's trying to ruffle your feathers, Monty. You know that," James reassured. "We got to go. The trainer is making teams now" James said.

"Calm down!" Monty yelled. "He's such a brat and he's so arrogant. Just walking around towering over everyone and showering insults! The kid doesn't know the struggles of being poor, he knows nothing!" James shook his head

"Calm your head down, we got to get to practice," James repeated. Monty scuffed and walked toward the practice. They got over just in time as the trainer started his little speech.

"Today, as you all know your lovely children are going to try out for the Chelsea youth team. For parents and kids, this is how it will work. For two days, each starting at 8, we will do drills for about two hours. And after those practices one of your lucky children will be on the Chelsea youth team! For information about how the youth team works, check your emails your coaches sent you. Now let's begin!"

James smiled at Monty, "Now let's begin."

"Whatever," Monty said, ignoring him.

"Let's get in line players!" The trainer yelled. James hurried up into line. "You ten at the end of the line, you're on the red team," the trainer yelled. James looked at the red team. Seven starters and three bench players.

"This will be fun," James mumbled.

"The rest of you are on the white team," the trainer yelled.

James looked at Monty. "This is going to be a beating," he whispered.

"At least we have Jasper, Chris, and Luca. Stop complaining," Monty said rolling his eyes.

"That's three people and they have Bernardo, Leroy, Max, Aaron, and Christian," James complained.

"And there the three best players," Monty remarked. A whistle pierced through the air interrupting them. James looked at the trainer.

"Come on," the trainer yelled. "We got a scrimmage to play."

The players line up in their formation - a 4-3-3. "Let's get going," the trainer yelled and with that, the game started.

Left and right James moved the ball stuck to his feet like a magnet. Right beside him flying toward the goal was Jasper. He launched a pass toward him. Jasper settled the ball and sprinted toward the goal, skilling out the two twins, Max and Aaron. In the middle was Chris, streaking toward the back post. Jasper crossed it toward Chris over hitting the pass a little. Monty ran toward the over hit pass, looking for a shot but instead passed it to Marcus who finessed it past the goalkeeper into the top right corner. "Let's go," James yelled as he celebrated with Marcus.

"1-0," the trainer yelled, and with that, the game started off again. Leroy streaked down the wing right away after the kickoff getting past three defenders. James tried to stop him but a flurry of stepovers from Leroy sent James flying. James spat out the grass in his mouth and quickly got up onto his feet, but Leroy was long gone. Leroy then cut into the box with his right foot going for goal but his shot hit off the crossbar. Monty and Christian raced for the ball. Christian got there first and annihilated Monty with a

Maradona, getting past him with ease. James then rushed over to try and stop Christian. He got there in time but collided with Christian. The impact of Christian's foot was harsh, knocking both James and Christian down. A whistle blew. The trainer then stopped the play and rushed to James who was still on the ground. "Come on get up," the trainer said, rushing over to James.

"I can't," James replied. Monty tried to pull him up but to no avail. "I'm bleeding, too," James said meekly .

"We got to get him off the field," Christian said.

James laughed. "When did you want to help me, Christian?"

"I need to practice, okay. Even if I made the team doesn't mean I don't want to keep playing." Christian remarked. James smiled. "That's a first," Christian said.

"Indeed," Leroy remarked. "Poor boy doesn't smile a lot, does he?"

"I know right," Rodrigo said.

"Come on, hurry up and get him off the field," the trainer yelled at the medics who were rushing onto the field. James took one more look at his injured ankle and went unconscious.

Fiction

Life Changing

By Alexa Nieves

"Logan, get down here! You are going to be late to your first hockey game." Logan's mom shouted. "Coming!" Logan replied while he shoved his clothes into his new duffle bag. He jogged down the stairs, already in his new uniform that read "Underwater Hockey" and on the back it said "Habel" in honor of his last name. This was his first game with his new team so he was pretty nervous. He had never played underwater hockey before and he wasn't even too clear on how to play, but he was sure that he could pick it up quickly. He loved swimming and playing hockey so he thought that this would be a piece of cake for him.

The whole ride there, Logan was silent and tapping his foot along with the radio. The closer they got to the game, the more nervous he got. Finally, after 10 minutes of driving, they arrived at the game location. Logan spotted some of his friends in a huge pool warming up. They were under water hitting the puck back and forth. Logan slowly took off his shirt and pants to get ready in his jersey and bathing suit. On his head, he wore a cap to control his hair from getting wet. His mom had just dropped him off because the coach requested that they were there an hour in advance to the game to practice.

Logan could smell the powerful smell of chlorine as soon as he entered the indoor pool. It was hot, humid, and bright in the room. Logan slowly dipped his feet in when he heard a familiar voice behind him. "Hey, Habel!" exclaimed one of his friends on the team, Ethan. He pushed Logan in the pool in a joking manner and hopped in after him. Logan expected the pool to only be a few feet deep but he was wrong, very wrong. The pool was 10 feet deep and Logan was only 4 feet and 10 inches, he was the shortest out of all his friends. Ethan was 5 foot, 2 inches, Jack was 5 foott, and Liam was 5 foot 6 inches, but no one was tall enough to stand in the pool. He wondered how they were supposed to swim to the bottom of a 10 foot pool to get the puck. Logan was already getting tired just from treading water. The team has had 2 practices so far, one Logan was in Hawaii for so he had to miss it and the other one only had 3 kids there so the coach ended it early. "Wildcats! Gather around for your equipment!" exclaimed the coach, Coach Mick. Coach Mick handed 1 foot sticks to attach to gloves that he also handed out, a puck for practicing at home, fins, and goggles. It was all very overwhelming for Logan.

"Team! I see Jay over there, their meanest player. Everyone keep an eye on him, he can be very sneaky. On another note, I need to pick my 10 starting players. For the first 15 minute half, we are going to start with Ethan, Bobby, Lucas, Harry, William, Xavier, Benjamin, Jack, Mason, and….", the coach trailed off looking around the room for his final starting player… "Logan!" he exclaimed. Logan looked around anxious. He did not want to start the game, he wanted to watch a little and get a feel for it before he was thrown in the middle of all this chaos. He quickly put on all his gear when he saw this mom entering the stands. She smiled and waved at him. He lightly smiled back.

His nerves were taking over and he froze up for about a minute. Finally he heard a whistle blow and all 20 players dove in the water. Luckily Logan started as one of the substitutes so he sat on a bench in the pool with 3 other teammates waiting for one of the players to get tired and have to take a break. Ethan was probably the best one on the whole team so he was mainly watching him. It didn't seem too hard, he thought. Bobby came up out of breath and tapped Logan on the shoulder. "Yes?" Logan asked. "Get in the game! We only have 5 players in right now!" Bobby shouted back. Logan took a deep breath and went under. "Wow," he thought, "It sure is deep under here." Ethan smiled at him.

Everyone was jabbing Logan and scooting past him as he sat on the bottom of the pool watching in amazement until one of his teammates looked at him and then shot the puck right towards his face. It bounced off his goggles when the other team started charging at him. Logan hit the puck towards the goal and scored! He went to the top of the water and started cheering. He wondered why everyone else was still down there. Slowly Ethan came up and took Logan to the bench with him. He tapped William and Mason on the shoulder in replace of them. "Wow, what a shot, right? I think it was just luck.." Logan went on bragging when Ethan stopped him and said, "Yeah, luck for the other team." Logan looked at him confused when Ethan explained that Logan had scored in the wrong goal. Logan's face turned bright red and he felt like crying. Ethan patted him on the back and tried to cheer him up. Harry popped his head up and tapped Logan but he did not want to go back in after that embarrassment. At the same time, he **did** want to go in to make it up to his teammates. The score was 1-1, he had 4 minutes left of this half and he was going to make the most of it.

After 3 minutes of getting shoved around some more, Logan was getting mad and frustrated. Just because he was the youngest one on the team, didn't mean that everyone had to shove him to the side. He was still a person and a part of this team so he was going after that puck! Xavier shot the puck but he missed, this was Logan's chance. He dove after the puck and made it there first. He looked around him and saw the other team running at him like bulls. He had to move quickly! There was only 48 seconds left in this half. He

scooped up the puck with his stick and sprinted towards the goal, he made sure it was the right one this time. By the time he made it to the goal, there was only 13 seconds left. He shot it and… SCORED!!!

The whole team came up to him patting him on the back and cheering him on when someone from the other team, Bulldogs pulled him back under water. He gave him a nuggie. Oh no, Ethan reminded Logan about someone on the other team who was a very sore loser. “Hey buddy, this was only the first half,” Logan assured the tall, buff boy treading water in front of him with steam coming out of his ears. The boy nudged him aside as he swam to the top angrily. Logan trailed after him when a hard flipper whacked him in the head. Logan toppled to the bottom of the pool and hit his head on the bottom roughly. Coach Mick immediately jumped in and grabbed Logan. He was unconscious. His mother came running over and was already calling the ambulance.

Within minutes, doctors were surrounding him, giving him CPR and mouth to mouth. Nothing was working. When he was down there, lots of water got into his lungs, which can be deadly. While the paramedics were with him, Coach Mick was checking the cameras to see who kicked him. It was Jay. Jay was the meanest, toughest, sorest losing kid on the whole team of the Bulldogs. It also seemed purposeful because Jay was very angry with Logan for scoring the winning goal of the first half. Everyone looked around for Jay to talk to him but he was nowhere to be found.

Finally Logan coughed up some water and took a deep breath. His mother comforted him and explained what had happened. Logan was very tired so he went home. Everyone agreed that the Wildcats just won that game even though it never technically finished. Ethan came up to him and there were already news reporters there shoving cameras and mics in his face asking questions left and right. One of the Wildcats members, Liam, was getting a call from Jay.

Everyone was silent as a mouse dying to see what he had to say. Liam quickly put Jay on speaker phone. “Liam, tell everyone I’m sorry for what happened today...I’m sorry that we never got to finish the game.” Jay was so insensitive. Even when he could have **killed** Logan, he was thinking about the game. He can never admit when he is wrong. He doesn’t even have enough decency to say sorry to Logan. “-but tell everyone that it wasn’t my fault. Logan grabbed my foot when I was swimming up. I thought I was tangled in something so I swung my foot and must have hit him.” Jay continued.

Logan started denying it to everyone that asked him. That is not how it happened at all! Logan thought in frustration. I can’t believe Jay is trying to pin this on me. “He was mad about my goal so he threatened me and then swam away. I did not touch him!” Logan exclaimed, getting annoyed. People were torn over who to believe. Both stories sounded convincing enough, but most people decided to side with Logan. Luckily Coach Mick hadn’t left the stadium yet and he had access to all cameras under water and

throughout the stadium. Ethan spotted him by the vending machine and shouted "Over there!" The whole team ran over and the news reporters followed.

Coach Mick had willingly agreed to check the cameras. Everyone was hovering around him waiting for the footage. He finally got it pulled up about 10 minutes later. When the footage got to 1 minute, everyone was dead silent until the camera fell to the floor and they could no longer see what was happening. Coach Mick ran to the pool and hopped in to find the camera wires ripped and the camera laying on the floor. The coach grabbed the camera and came up with it. Everyone sighed in disappointment. They couldn't see who ripped it off in the video so the mystery still remained. Logan decided to go home.

Ethan came over so they could practice underwater hockey in his pool so Logan could become as good as Ethan. After warming up and exercising for about 15 minutes, Logan's mom came outside and pulled him aside. "Logan, do you really want to keep doing this? You could have-," she trailed off. "...got hurt, possibly died."

"I know mom, but this stuff is rare."

"Ok you can practice with Ethan right now but when the next game comes around we will have to have a family conversation."

"Thanks mom!" exclaimed Logan. So, he hopped back into the pool to join Ethan.

20 minutes later, when they were underwater fighting for the puck, they heard footsteps. Logan assumed that it was his mom bringing out some snacks but when they came out, it was to their surprise to see Jay. "He-Hello." Logan stuttered. "I'm going to get you back for-", Logan's mom barged through the door. Jay started hysterically sobbing. "Your-Your kid grabbed my foot and now everyone thinks it is my -my fault," Jay said through tears.

"That is **not** how the story went at all, you were mad about my goal so you kicked me and knocked me out." Logan's mom was of course on her kids side but she couldn't help feeling bad for Jay just a little. Logan's mom decided to forgive and forget. He was just a kid and everyone makes mistakes. Maybe he was just jealous and couldn't help getting mad. Maybe it wasn't on purpose so she decided to invite him to join them.

"Would you like to join them in the pool, Jay? If the teams are uneven I can play too." Logan's mom suggested. Jay's face lit up and he quickly stopped crying to accept the offer.

"I call Logan's mom for my team!" Jay shouted lightly, smiling at her.

"Let me just go get into my bathing suit, guys. Also let me get some snacks for you guys." 10 minutes later, Logan's mom came out full ready in a face mask, goggles, a snorkel, flippers, and a bright red

bikini. In her hand, she was holding a tray full with granola bars, fruit cups, bananas, chips, and brownies. The kids all hopped at the brownies. In minutes, all the snacks (except for the bananas) were devoured.

They all hopped in the refreshing, cool pool and made a team plan. The game started! Logan and his mom fought for the pucks while Jay and Ethan were goalies. They have been playing for 15 minutes and Logan already felt so much better but he also felt tired, really tired. Suddenly Logan choked back something in his mouth and he sprinted out of the pool. He should have let his food digest. Logan barfed all over Jay's hair. Logan was expecting a hissy fit of curses and tantrums but Jay just said "Are you ok, buddy?" Logan responded a little confused, "Yes.." Maybe it was a trick. Jay respectfully asks to use their shower to wash off his hair and they willingly agree of course.

"Lalala." Jay sang in the shower. He thought to himself for a while about his parents. They said that they told him to do it just to protect him but he found it hard to believe that it was actually about protecting him. He started thinking aloud a little to himself. He role played a conversation with his dad if he asked him where he was the past hour. Logan walked past the door and heard him over talking to him. "Dad, I was just on a walk. No, too hard to believe. Dad, I was at a friend's house." Logan asked Jay what he was doing. Jay kept humming for a minute acting as if he didn't hear Logan ask him. He hoped that he would just go away and forget about it but no, Logan asked again. Jay just decided to tell the truth after Logan asked a couple more times. "My dad told me to injure the best player of the game so they would get scared and play worse. It is wrong and I shouldn't have done it but he made me! He was at the game watching my every move. Then we ran out as soon as the paramedics arrived so no one would interview us. As you can see, under pressure I crack. My dad was next to me making me say those words on the phone. He told me all the right things to say so I wouldn't mess it up. I am sorry that I threw you under the bus and acted like it was all your fault. I tried to become friends with everyone until my dad made me make this pact with him."

Logan sighed. I can't believe any parent would be so insensitive and tell their kid to injure another child, Logan thought but all he said to Jay was "Well I'm glad that you came over today, friend!" He could tell that Jay was upset and felt really bad about what he did so Logan decided to forgive him. He dropped off a towel and closed the bathroom door.

Logan went to tell his mom. Logan's mom questioned if this was true or if Jay just felt made it all up. After a couple minutes of thinking, she decided to forgive him, too. He seemed like a good boy and some people **do** just have messed up parents like that and Logan's mom especially took pity on those kids. After Jay was all dressed and dried up, Logan's mom took him home. The car ride was pretty much silent until towards the end when Jay said "Mrs. Habel, I assume that Logan told you everything so I just hope that you can believe me and maybe Logan can even come over sometime if he would like to."

"It's ok sweetie I understand and I think Logan would love that." Logan's mom exclaimed as she pulled up into his driveway. She walked him in and waited with him for someone to answer. She could tell Jay was embarrassed of his tiny house and that no one was answering.

Finally a little old lady came up to the door and grabbed Jay by the sweater. The old lady was about to slam the door in Mrs. Habel's face until she said "Jay was a pleasure today. He is a good boy."

"Okay." the old lady responded.

"Are you Jay's grandma?"

"I'm his mom!" she shouted clearly offended.

"Oh sorry about the mishap. Well, have a good night you two." She slammed the door in his face. Logan's mom was shocked as to how rude Jay's mom was. Now she understood just where Jay was coming from. A big, old lady like that can be intimidating for a young boy like Jay, imagine what his dad looked like.

The next day they had another game against the same team but Jay wasn't there. Everyone wanted to ask him about yesterday and get the **true** facts. They waited around for 10 minutes, then 15 until the game just had to start. Everyone got in their positions. Logan started the game today but after what Jay told him, he couldn't help thinking why he wasn't here. The other team had 10 players exactly so they got no breaks. In the second half, Logan overheard the coach telling his team something and he heard Jay's name! Logan and Ethan acting natural but truly they were eavesdropping and they heard that Jay couldn't come because of his dad. His dad doesn't want him being part of the team anymore and his mom agreed.

Logan wondered why Jay couldn't come so he decided to stop by his house. He knocked, no reply. He rang the doorbell, no answer. He looked through the window and saw Jay sitting on the couch. He wondered why he didn't answer. Logan got Jay's attention finally after waving and whistling. Jay gave him a stare that said you shouldn't be here. Then Jay walked away. Logan didn't want to leave on that suspenseful note, he wondered what was wrong and why Jay was acting so weird. Two minutes later, Jay came back and slid a note under the door. He waved goodbye through the peephole and Logan was on his way to walk home.

The note read, "Hi Logan! I'm sorry that I was not at the game today and that we couldn't talk face to face. My dad doesn't want me being on the team anymore because someone told him that I told you about his sabotage plan. I don't know who told him and why they did but yesterday I got a beating for doing it so I'm afraid that we can't be friends anymore. We also may be moving as a punishment for me. I had to swear never to tell anyone but I had to tell the truth to my friend, my only friend, you. I have to go now, talk to you

later my number is 918-546-3271, text me :).” Logan felt terrible. He showed his mom the note as soon as he got home.

The next day, Logan stopped by Jay’s house. There were no cars in the driveway. Maybe Jay was home alone again. Logan went to the window, no sign of Jay. He knocked and rang the doorbell but nothing. He waited for a couple of minutes until his mom’s car came screeching up. “Logan get in!” his mom shouted. Logan hopped in the car. He was very confused but could tell that his mom was stressed out so he stayed silent until they arrived in a dim alley near a supermarket. There was Jay and a huge, hairy guy leaning over him about to hit him again. Logan couldn’t believe his eyes. He stayed close to his mom in case the dad cracked.

“Excuse me, sir. What are you doing?” Logan’s mom yelled. Jay looked thrilled that someone had come to help him.

“None of your business!” Jay’s dad replied in a nasty tone. Jay’s dad took another swing at him. Logan’s mom couldn’t stand to watch this anymore so she tried to kill him with kindness.

“Where are you from? What is your name?” she asked.

“None of your business!” he replied again very rudely.

After 3 minutes of everyone standing around trying to get Jay’s dad to stop, the police arrived. “Yes!” Logan’s mom whispered. They grabbed Jay’s dad and put him in handcuffs.

“Sir, you are going to jail.” the cop said sternly. “Is there any family or friends that you can leave him with?” Jay’s dad shook his head, no.

“We can take him until there is a resolution.” Logan’s mom offered.

“Yes, please!” Jay said. The cop made her sign some contracts but then Jay was living with Logan and his mom until they had another solution.

2 months later

Jay was still living with Logan. No family had offered to take him. His aunt was across the country in California. His mom was nowhere to be found, she must have ran away and his grandparents had passed away last year. Jay was happy about his situation and so was Logan. They were getting really close, like brothers. Jay also loved his new temporary house. It had 4 bedrooms so he got his own bedroom even though he and Logan had sleepovers most nights. It had 3 bathrooms, one in each room so he also got his own bathroom. It also had an outdoor pool, deck, mini swing set, and Logan’s mom had bought Jay a ton of clothes and toys for his room. She bought him Star Wars sheets, a pink shirt, a blue shirt, a yellow polo shirt,

a white T-shirt, 2 pairs of jeans, 2 pairs of shorts, some navy blue sweatpants, a Mets cap, and a Star Wars lamp to match his sheets. On the other hand, in Jay's old house, he only had 1 bedroom, a sofa bed, (he got the sofa bed and his parents got the bedroom), 1 bathroom, no laundry room, a tiny kitchen combined with the dining room, and a small basement where there was a mini fridge. Jay also never had much clothes, he had some sunglasses, a couple of black or red t-shirts, 3 pairs of shorts, and 1 pajama that was Star Wars. His grandma had given him that pajama before she passed. Jay was also enjoying Logan as a temporary step-brother. They had game night every Tuesday, movie night every Saturday and they went to church every Sunday which Jay really liked. He had always wanted to be more strong to his religion and now he had the perfect opportunity. Mrs. Habel was also a very loving mom to Jay. She made him feel very welcome.

1 year later

"Where do I sign?" Logan's mom asked.

"I'm so excited!" Jay exclaimed. It has been a year fostering Jay and still no family has stepped up so Logan's family was going to adopt him. Logan had always wanted another brother but after his dad died at the age of 2, his mom never remarried. After all the papers had been signed, they drove home.

"Welcome Home Jay!" Logan's mom cried out. Jay almost had tears in his eyes. This is what Jay had always wanted.

How Different Sports Around the World Are Responding to the Pandemic

Daniel Aguilera, Aidan Rogers, Nathaniel Rodgers

(Video Available on the WoS Website)

Baseball: Struggling

Football: Struggling

Cheeserolling: Cancelled

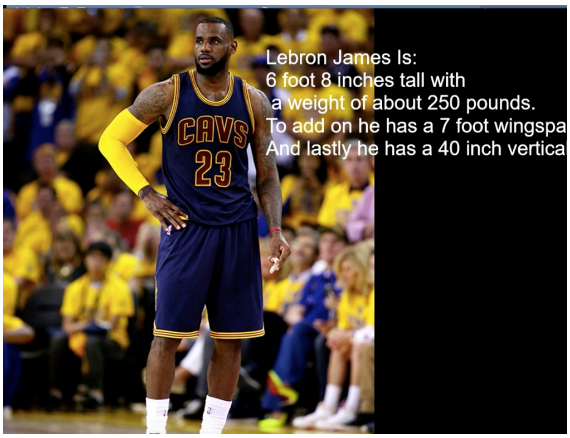
Bo-Taoshi: Still Happening

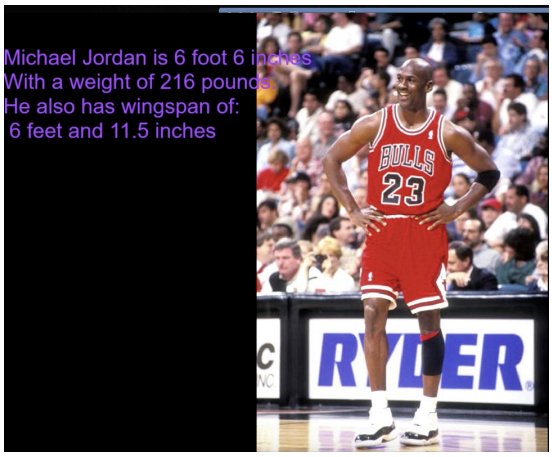
LeBron vs. Jordan: Don't Compare Them

Amari Akakpo

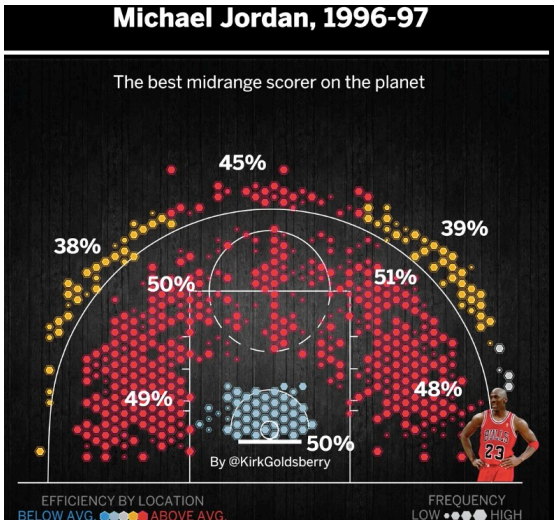
(Video Available on the WoS Website)

Reason One: They Have Different Body Types





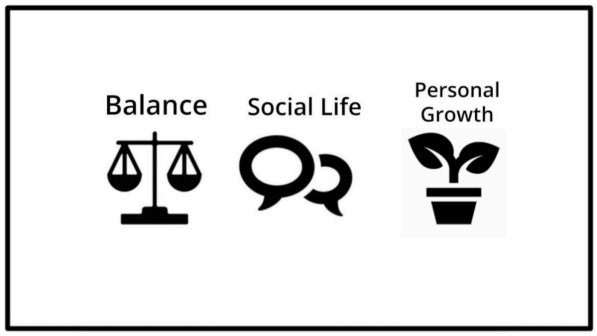
Reason Two: They Have Different Styles of Play



What Are the Benefits of Athletics for High School Students?

Nia Caesar

(Video Available on the WoS Website)



The Basketball Daily

Earl Hart III

(Video Available on the WoS Website)

Will the NBA Be Able to Complete Their Season?

Richard Jefferson: “Yes.”

Ryan Ruocco: “Yes.”

Matt Goldsmith: “Yes.”

Earl is not convinced.

60 Game Fluke?

Michael Wyche

(Video Available on the WoS Website)

Will baseball be able to complete its 60 game season?

Marvin Wyche, Long Time Fan:

"Maybe, I hope so."

Earl Hart III, Young Fan:

"Maybe, I hope so."

Julian McWilliams, Baseball Beat Reporter:

"Maybe, I hope so."

Michael:

"Maybe not, but I hope so."

Who will win the NBA title: Lakers or Clippers?

Kayla Griffith and Isaac Obeso

(Podcast Available on the WoS Website)

Kayla says the Clippers because of their star players and better head-to-head match-up with the Lakers.

Isaac says the Lakers because of their veteran players like LeBron James and Anthony Davis and the urgency they have to win.

Ryan Ruocco agreed with Isaac that the Lakers will have more urgency to win.

Richard Jefferson agreed with Kayla that the Clippers are a better all-around team.

We Know Sports

Friane Joroff, Tanner Joroff, Tyler Levy

(Podcast Available on the WoS Website)

Fraine, Tanner and Tyler begin with a brief overview of sports news during Covid and then shift to a focus on different types of cheating in sports.

Tyler starts the conversation with an overview of cheating with the use specific equipment. Two examples the group discusses are deflating balls in football and corking bats in baseball.

Tanner then describes cheating in sports using technology. The group discusses the stealing and relaying of signs in baseball and the filming of another team's practices in football.

Fraine shifts the conversation to athletes using performance enhancing drugs to gain an edge in their sport. The group discusses the impact of steroid use on the sports of cycling and baseball.

Fraine, Tanner, and Tyler agree that the biggest problem with cheating is sports is that it damages the integrity of the game.

T2: The Bubble Brief

Sean Harrington and Sam Bellott

(Podcast Available on the WoS Website)

Sean and Sam discuss the restart of the NBA in the bubble and offer their analysis and predictions about players and teams.

They start with a segment ranking their respective lists of top-five players. Sean and Sam each share their list based on player performance during the first part of the season and who they think will play best in the bubble.

In their segment called “Contender or Pretender,” Sean and Sam predict which eight teams will make the playoffs in each conference and which of those have a legitimate chance to win the title (contenders) and which will make the playoffs but not go far (pretenders).

Sean and Sam share their take on specific players based on factors including individual statistics, injuries, and team dynamics in a segment they call “High or Low.”

Sean and Sam end the podcast with their awards predictions. They share their opinions on who will win the MVP, Rookie of the Year, Coach of the Year, Most Improved, and the 6th Man of the Year.