

# **6: Writing the story**

**Sport Journalism  
Beijing Sport University**

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## **Recap**

- **Storytelling and news values:**
  - Conflict
  - Timeliness
  - Prominence
  - Proximity
  - Consequence or impact
  - Human interest
  - Unusual
- **Any questions?**

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## Assignment over break – questions?

- **Feature story analysis**
- Examine how topics discussed in this course apply to an “iconic” Sports Illustrated feature story
- 1. Pick a story (research, browse!). Summarize. Topic, news value?
- 2. Writing style?
- 3. Sources?
- 4. Compare to Chinese features
- 5. Reflect
- 6. Formal: (...) up to **2 pages** on **1 sheet**. Due in lesson 9
  - 10% of final grade
  - Detailed prompts at <https://sportj.weebly.com/>

## Grading policy clarification:

- Attendance: 10%
- Participation: 10% (some in-class assignments you turn in)
- Play-by-play broadcast: 20%
- **Feature story analysis: 10%**
- Exam: **50%** (was: 60%)

## Today

- Write a story
  - Lead
  - Body – structure
- Language and style: Headlines

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## Lead

- **Opening (first) paragraph.** Sets the scene, tells readers and viewers what happened
- In sports stories, the lead usually introduces the **teams, players, competition, score**, and *at least a hint* at **how** play led to the outcome
  - Which questions should thus be answered?
- **Who, what, where, when, why, how**

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## Taurasi reaches 1,000 career 3s, Mercury win WNBA opener

PHOENIX (AP) — Diana Taurasi scored 20 of her 26 points in the first half and became the first WNBA player with 1,000 career 3-pointers, helping the Phoenix Mercury beat the Dallas Wings 86-78 on Friday night in the league's season opener.

Taurasi's one of four players, joining the NBA's Damian Lillard, Stephen Curry and Klay Thompson, to reach the 3-point mark with less than 400 games played.

DeWanna Bonner returned after missing last season to give birth to twins, and had 17 points and 12 rebounds for Phoenix. Brittney Griner, coming off a championship in Russia, battled foul trouble and finished with 13 points. Newcomer Briann January added 10 points.

[Associated Press, May 19, 2018](#)

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## Lead

- No matter where readers exit the story, they will have enough information to know what happened
- In a *sports feature* (and sometimes in regular articles), the lead focuses on a person or a topic, drawing the audience in with **examples, anecdotes, an unusual circumstance**
  - **Delayed lead**

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## Lead

- Provide key info at the beginning
  - Capture readers; they decide in 7-14 words whether to keep reading
- Attract readers while not giving away too much (who played & who won...**but how?**)
- Reflect tension, energy of the event
- Who, what, where, when, why, how

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## Lead

- Sometimes written first, often written last
  - Game reports written in chronological order; lead and conclusion written at the end
  - **Feature (and more): Lead often reveals itself as the story unfolds**

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## Lead structure choice

- Informed by **news values**:
  - Record is set: Consequence, impact
  - Car flips over, crosses finish line: ?
  - Famous player, personality: ?
  - Fight breaks out on the court: ?
  
  - Nothing of the above: Outcome of the “inherent” conflict (i.e., the game), top scorers or performances

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## Exercise – story we could write about?

- Dajing WU wins Olympic gold medal
  - Who = ?
  - What = ?
  - Where = ?
  - When = ?
  - Why = ?
  - How = ?

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## Exercise

- Which component has the **highest news value** to the audience? Start with that!
  - Prominent person or team?
  - Play that decided the game?
- Summarize story in one-two sentences
- Day, date are **rarely** the most important part

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## Direct, delayed leads

- **Direct:** Present key information quickly, in the opening
  - Quick and easy to **compose**
  - **Readers** decide whether to keep reading
  - **Editors** can cut the story if too long
- **Delayed:** Start with visual description and/or emotional appeal
  - 5W+H mentioned several paragraphs into the story
  - Frequent with profiles, in-depth stories

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## Rockets-Warriors a roller-coaster of blowouts after 3 games

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — One thing is clear through three games of the power-packed Western Conference finals between a Golden State team that has won two of the past three championships and a Houston team that had a league-best 65 wins.

If either team is off its game, a blowout could ensue.

The Rockets found themselves on the wrong end of that equation in a 126-85 defeat in Game 3 that was the most lopsided loss in their postseason history and the biggest win ever for the Warriors, who took a 2-1 series lead.

Now the big question heading into Game 4 on Tuesday night is which team has the edge if both are clicking.

[Associated Press, May 21, 2018](#)

## Leads to Avoid

- Ask a question (“Do you know what happened...?”)
- Quotation. Excellent ones are very rare. **If used**, the next sentence must explain the situation:  
“I’m back.”

These were the only words printed on a news release issued by Michael Jordan’s agent Wednesday, announcing the basketball player’s return to professional play.





For immediate release  
Contact: David B. Falk  
202/688-2000

WASHINGTON, DC. (March 18, 1995) - The following statement was released today by Michael Jordan, through his personal attorney and business manager David B. Falk, Chairman of Falk Associates Management Enterprises, Inc. ("FAME") located in Washington, D.C., in response to questions about his future career plans:

"I'm back."

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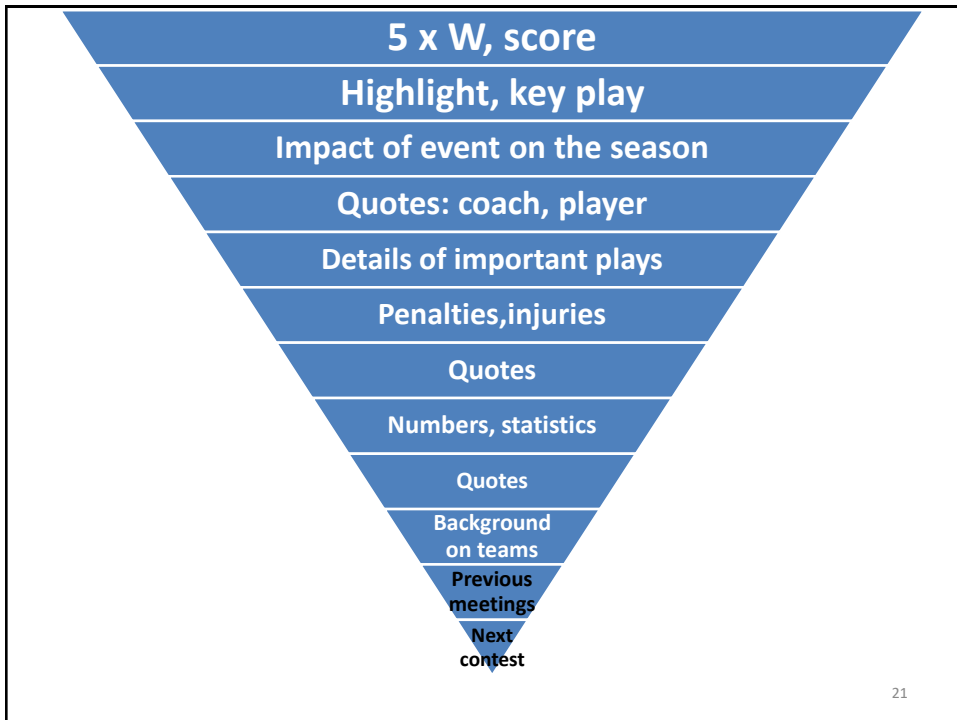
- See also [this article](#)

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## Story structure

- Collect information, identify facts, research, interview sources; **how to organize the story?**
  - **Inverted pyramid**
    - Most important content at the top...descending order by importance
    - Most frequent organization pattern.
1. Who won and what was the score
  2. What happened
  3. Interesting details (but still details)

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## Rockets head into Game 3 confident after big win in Game 2

HOUSTON (AP) — The Rockets have reason to feel good, tied with Golden State after winning Game 2 in a rout in the Western Conference finals.

But a big challenge awaits Sunday at Oracle Arena, where the Warriors have won an NBA-record tying 15 straight playoff games.

Houston coach Mike D'Antoni knows all about Golden State's success in Oakland, but thinks it has less to do with being at home than the fact that the Warriors are a great team.

"The challenge is you're playing Golden State. That's why they've won 15 in a row. Not because of the building, but because they're good," he said. "All these players are used to playing in hostile environments."

The Rockets aren't daunted by Golden State's winning streak there and are looking forward to the challenge.

"It's definitely a great place to play," Trevor Ariza said. "Their fans are great. They bring a lot of energy to the game."

[Associated Press, May 18, 2018](#)<sup>22</sup>

## Rockets head into Game 3 confident after big win in Game 2

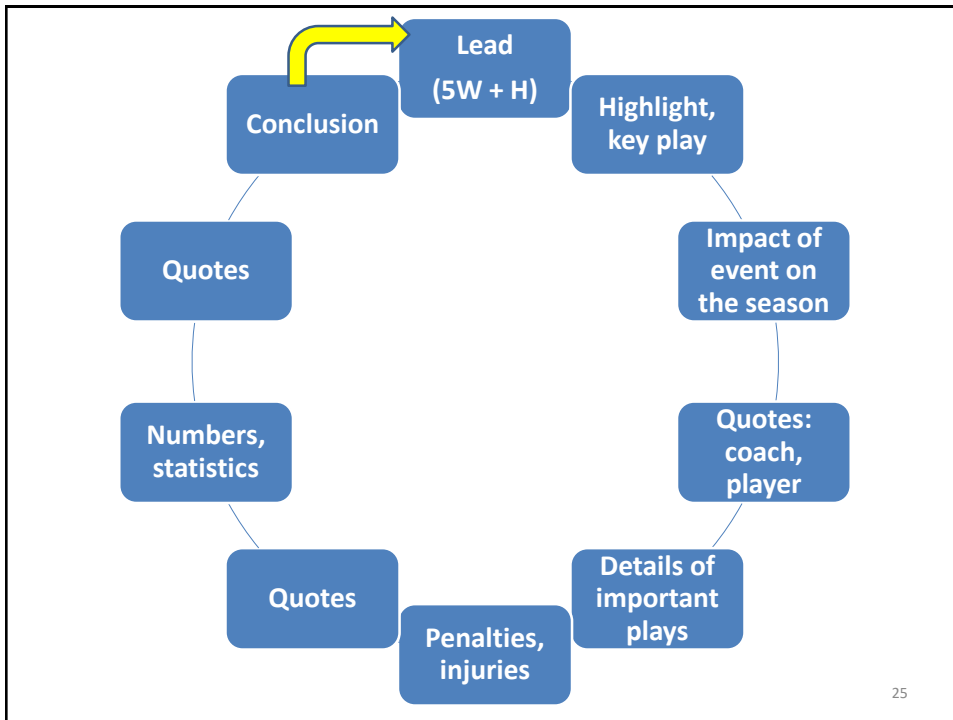
- 5W + H (next match)
- Key statistic: Warriors streak
- Quote by coach D'Antoni
- Quote by Trevor Ariza (key player)
- Ariza (key player) statistics
- Quote by James Harden (key player)
- Rockets key statistics
- Quote by James Harden
- Rockets vs. Warriors history
- Quote by James Harden
- Kevin Durant statistics, Stephen Curry injury, Rockets expectations
- Ariza quote
- Warriors, Rockets notes on experience
- Quote by Chris Paul (important player)

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## Circular structure

- Sometimes found in feature stories
- All components contribute (equally) to the story; **wrap** (conclusion) ties back to the **opening** (lead)
  - Sequence of topics might be same as inverted pyramid style, only contribution to story is “different” and importance equal

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## Exercise (2)

- What else would we include in the story we started earlier?

## Headlines

- What readers notice first
- Must present the story **accurately** (no misleading, no double-meaning)
- Use **specific, concise** words
  - If possible, include player or team names
- Use **conversational** language
  - Andy Murray beaten by Fabio Fognini in Rome Masters second round

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## *Headline examples*

- Andy Murray: Former Wimbledon champion not ready for ATP return
- Muhammad Ali Dies at 74: Titan of Boxing and the 20<sup>th</sup> Century
- Yao carries Olympic torch at Beijing's Forbidden City
- Taurasi reaches 1.000 career 3s, Mercury win WNBA opener

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## Headlines – convention


- No full stop (period), but ? and ! are used
- **Present** tense for past and present events
  - French Open loses 4 seeds on Day 1
  - ~~French Open lost 4 seeds on Day 1~~
- **Infinitive** form of verb for future events
  - Federer to receive Hall of Fame honor
  - ~~Federer will receive Hall of Fame honor~~
- **Action** verbs (appropriate!)
  - Jackson earns new position
  - ~~Jackson in new position~~

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## Style

- How to **write, present information, structure text**
- Most common in U.S. is Associated Press (AP) style
  - General formatting, text organization, spelling, grammar, numbers, punctuation, etc. standard
  - Other outlets – New York Times, the Times, Reuters, etc. – have additional style guides

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- Good investment if you contemplate a **career in journalism or translation**
- Good investment even if you do not aspire to write for Associated Press
  - Shoot for the moon, even in terms of style

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## Review

- **Lead:** direct, delayed
- **Structure:** inverted pyramid, circular
- Style + headlines

## Tomorrow

- Radio play-by-play
- Transcript posted at <http://sportj.weebly.com>, read and/or bring to class to follow along?