

Team Reporting 101

A Few Basic Guidelines to Help Make your Team Reporting Job Easy and Fun

Want to help promote your sport and local players? When stories about games are reported, the players will get to feel like the stars they are as their best plays are reported in the local media week to week.

This provides a few basic guidelines based on the Canadian Press Style Guide, practices of newspaper reporting and the preferences of Sooke's local media. Use these tips to help make the fun job of team reporting even easier.

Check in with your local media

Will your local newspaper accept submitted content? If you are the communications lead for your sports organization, check in with the editor at the beginning of the season to see if they will accept submitted stories. Ask about their deadlines and who the main contact should be, then promote to all your team managers so they can recruit a team reporter. If you can't publish in the local media, use your organization's website or social media group to publish stories about the games.

Respecting privacy

Ensure your organization has a policy that allows publication and players (or their parents if they are minors) have consented to publication. Most local organizations have that policy, but if you are new to an organization, always check. And always ensure you are aware if anyone has NOT consented to having an image or name published.

At the Game

- Bring a pen and an extra pen, along with some paper.
- Take some basic notes during the game. When someone scores, make some notes about how it was scored.
- Is there a goaltender, catcher or defence? Note some instances of outstanding play by the defenders and other members of the team who may not have scored.
- Check the official game sheet after the game to make sure you have an accurate record of the score and who scored.
- Note the team names and the final score.
- Note the tone of the game – was it fun? Quick moving? Evenly matched? Exciting?
- All these notes will help you fill in a lively story.
- Bring a camera (or use your cel phone camera) to capture some images of the game.

Getting Started

KISS – Keep It Short and Simple

- Local newspapers have limited space for reports. You have a better chance of getting your story published if it's short. Aim for one-two sentences per paragraph; and no more than three or four paragraphs per story.

Open with the most exciting and interesting thing about the game (or games if you are covering a tournament).

Having a hard time getting started?

- Sometimes it's difficult to know where to start so here's an idea: think about the biggest news and most positive part of the game. Imagine that one of the parents or teammates couldn't make the game and you are telling them about it.
- What do you say first? ("We won", "We had a really close game", "We were leading at first and then the other team caught up"; "The other team was really rough but our kids didn't rise to the bait – they made us proud.")
- Sometimes saying it out loud helps you find the best lead.

DON'T use the boring old standard "*The Sooke team played against Saanich over the weekend.*" Talk about *how* they played.

DO use the five (or four) Ws – What, Where, When, Who (Why) – and How.

And, if you have a team sponsor, give them a shout out.

Examples of starting paragraphs:

The Edward Milne senior boys outplayed Belmont in every way on their home court Thursday. Forwards Juan Tascor, Pierce Dunnett and Shew Dabahl were a powerhouse, netting 12 out of 14 baskets.

The 4M Bobcat Sooke Midget Thunderbird girls made an amazing come back against Victoria at Archie Browning arena last week. The Ice Hawks got an early lead, but the Sooke girls kept their spirits high and never gave up.

The Sooke 2 for 1 Pizza PeeWee Seahawks defenders shone in action in Langford Sunday. Ty Emmup and Watt Churcatch were impenetrable.

The Rest of the Story

You've got your first paragraph, now what next?

- If you have one game to write about, you'll have room to include a little play by play.
- If you have more than one game to report on, especially if it's about a tournament, wrap the games together into one three-four paragraph story.

DO include names of players who play well but don't always score any points. Mention offence and defence who work hard and always mention the goaltenders. HINT: Focus on what the players do best so everyone gets a chance to shine.

DON'T always focus first on the goal scorers. Playing and winning the game is a team effort so watch for good plays on offence and defence, whether they ended up on the scoresheet or not.

HINT: you don't have to mention every player on your team in every report. Watch for someone who's working particularly hard. If you do end up with a game where there are a lot of goals and almost everyone gets mentioned, then don't single out one or two players by excluding them – write everyone up in those circumstances.

Example of play by play:

The Sooke girls were down by three in the third period when Em Teenette and Jess Passdepuck got a two on one, allowing Teenette to send it in. The Ice Hawks got another goal, but Sooke answered with quick thinking by Wynn Degame -- she saw a chance and passed to partner Dee Fence, who was able to whack it in from the blue line.

Example of wrapping games together:

In action at the spring soccer tournament Saturday, Luke Attammy scored three goals and Ben Schwarmer got his first goal of the season. The next day, Attammy bested Saanich twice, while Sooke's Ned Tender never let the other team get the ball in his net.

Example of focus on players other than goal scorers:

In one of the most exciting moments of the game, Neve Erscored hit a double and slid into second base. Langford fumbled the ball twice allowing Erscored to steal third while Hayley Fast got to home plate to take the lead for Sooke.

Sending your report to the paper

You've written a perfect three paragraph story. You have a clever lead and the name of the sponsor is in there. Now what? Double check to make sure you follow some basic rules of newspaper reporting.

Names

- Include the first and last name of the player in their first mention in a report. Just use the last name only on subsequent mentions.
- Make sure names are spelled correctly. Nothing thrills a child more than to see their name or photo published – but it's a big disappointment if it's spelled wrong. HINT: Get a team list from your manager. Double check the spelling with each family and see what name the players prefer (for example: Luke, Luc or Lucas; Danny or Daniel; Jessica or Jess). Post that list where you write. Double check your spelling by referring to the list AFTER you write the story.

Numbers

- Write out numbers from one to nine; use numerals for numbers 10, 11, 12 and higher.

Meet the deadline

- Check your local paper for their deadline.
- HINT: if your team played on the weekend write up and send in your story Sunday afternoon or evening while it is fresh in your mind.

Don't forget the photo

If you have a great photo, send it with your story (and don't forget to add a cutline that identifies the players in the photograph).

Good luck and happy reporting!