The Write Team

Writing a Good Game: 
*Sports Writing*

Teaching Ideas 
**Key Stage 3**

by David Goldblatt
Contents

1) Warm Ups and Work Outs: The Language of Sport
2) Play it short, keep it simple: Sports reports
3) Tweet, Tweet
4) “Just how much did that goal mean to you?”
   Cliché, Commentary and Subversion
5) Keep Your Eye on the Ball: Observation, Description and Reportage
6) Poetry in Motion
7) Studying Form: The Wonderful World of the Sports Reference Books
8) Sports Interviews
1. **Warm Ups and Work Outs: The Language of Sport**

This session will:

- Familiarise students with the different elements of a newspaper.
- Introduce students to explore the power and meaning of captions.

**a. The Sounds of Sport**

Sport has a fantastic aural quality, the whooooooooooosh of a golf ball in flight, the dull thud - thhhhhhhuuunkkkkk - of a rugby player hitting the turf, the “aaaarrrrrrrrrrrrzzzz...” roar of F1 Engines etc...

Cartoons and graphic novels are often very creative in spelling out noises....what are the written forms of the sounds of sport?

Ask the class to have a go at the following.

They can do this by just writing the sounds out, but if you can ask them to draw the sounds out in comic book/graphic novel style – big bold block letters, variation in size and angle etc.

- Tennis player’s grunts.
- The sound of a bone-breaking football tackle.
- A cricket ball flying off a bat.
- The sound of horse’s hooves in a race.
- The sound of skater’s blades cutting ice.
- The sound of fencing blades clashing.
- The sound of an ice axe on a glacier.
• The sound of a wave that is just about to give a ride.
• The sound of a golf swing.
• The sound of a crowd after a missed goal.
• The sound of a marathon runner's feet in training.
• The sound of a snooker ball being potted.

b. Decoding the Back Pages

Sport is something you play or watch, but do we read about it?

Where can you read about sport? Initiate discussion.

In fact, there are absolutely loads of places we read about sport:

The internet, match programmes, novels, plays, histories encyclopaedias and yearbooks.....but the back pages in the daily newspapers are, just about, still the most important...wow what else gets so much dedicated space in the papers.

Hand out a mix of papers with sports sections – the Sun and the Guardian perhaps: Part of the purpose of the activity is just to get students used to handling and exploring a newspaper, partly it is to begin exploring sports writing and graphics.

Ask the students to glance over them and using a highlighter pen to circle any of the features listed below that they recognise:

• The visual style, headlines, pictures etc...
• The types of article and writing.
• The use of photography and graphic devices.
• The sorts of words used, even the feel of the papers.

Then go back and identify and define:
• Headlines - think about style, font.

• Running heads – across the tops of the pages – often used to subdivide sports sections into
different elements.

• Sub heads - the small text beneath headlines that usually expands upon the main headline or
even makes it comprehensible.

• By lines – the name of the writer/journalist.

• Pictures and captions.

• Side bars - boxes etc that add info, especially statistics, to an article.

• Match/event reports.

• Match/event previews.

• Biographical sketches – profile of a player or personality written without an interview.

• Columns - will usually have a big by - line and a photo of the columnist – note they come in very
different forms – gossip, opinion, humour.

• Interviews.

• Rumour and tittle-tattle.

• Humorous items.

• Statistical boxes, lists, records, comparisons.

• Results, league tables.

• TV Guides.

• Betting Guides.

• Racing cards.

c. Write a Caption
Look at the captions in the sports sections of the newspaper. Do they have a structure or a style?

Many will have a short punchy title followed by a single sentence of description, others may have just straight description, and others might offer some kind of commentary or ancillary information. There is no one right way to do it, but good captions should be simple, punchy, and add something to the photo. They can be humorous, or ironic.

d. Over to you....

Give students a selection of sports photographs from newspapers or the web and ask them to write a caption for each one.

Invite the pupils to think about what you think is happening before writing your caption. Look carefully at the picture and consider the setting: What do you think is going on? Comment on the setting? Where is it? What sort of buildings do you see? What is the landscape like?

Other things to look for:

- Clothes? Who is wearing what?
- Action? What is happening...are they still or moving? What sort of movement?
- Facial expression?

Once you have really studied the picture then write your caption – in any style, it can be descriptive, humorous or just give details about what is happening.
2. Play it short, keep it simple: Sports reports

This session will:

- Allow students to enjoy playing with words.
- Develop understanding of techniques used to write sports previews and match reports.
- Apply these techniques to a preview and match report.

a. Warm Up: Malapropisms or Play the “Doh” Factor

Option 2 – Read out the Kevin Keegan quotes and ask the students to rate them out of ten for stupidity – bonus points for identifying tautologies.

'It's like a toaster, the ref's shirt pocket. Every time there's a tackle, up pops a yellow card.'

'I don't think there's anyone bigger or smaller than Maradona.'

'The good news for Nigeria is that they're two-nil down very early in the game...' 

'They're the second best team in the world, and there's no higher praise than that.'

'I'll never play at Wembley again, unless I play at Wembley again.'

'Shaun Wright-Phillips has got a big heart. It's as big as him, which isn't very big, but it's bigger.'

'You get bunches of players like you do bananas, though that is a bad comparison.'

'We are three games without defeat is another way of looking at it. But if we are honest we have taken two points from nine.'

'I want more from David Beckham. I want him to improve on perfection.'
'Argentina won't be at Euro 2000 because they're from South America.'

'The 33 or 34-year-olds will be 36 or 37 by the time the next World Cup comes around, if they're not careful.'

'You're not just getting international football, you're getting world football.'

'In some ways, cramp is worse than having a broken leg.'

'There'll be no siestas in Madrid tonight.'

'They compare Steve McManaman to Steve Heighway and he's nothing like him, but I can see why - it's because he's a bit different.'

'Goalkeepers aren't born today until they're in their late twenties or thirties.'

"Despite his white boots, he has real pace.'

'I know what is around the corner - I just don't know where the corner is. But the onus is on us to perform and we must control the bandwagon.'

'I'm not disappointed - just disappointed.'

'Nicolas Anelka left Arsenal for £23million and they built a training ground on him.'
b. Précis

Give the students a short match preview to read.

Ask them to précis it in 7 words (like a headline).

Invite students to read their 7 words aloud for discussion.

Now précis the same article in 30 words, what are the most important things to add now?

Think of it, perhaps, in terms of adding a sub head and an extra sentence in the style of sports papers. Focus on the essence of a story - beginning, middle, end, turning points, key characters, key adjectives to give correct feel etc.

Once again invite the students to read their 30 words out for discussion.

c. Over to you - Match previews

What do match previews do?

Try and tell you what’s at stake – it might be a tennis player on the verge of their first title, or a football game which will take one side to the top of the table or send another to the bottom of the league.

Preview writers always look to offer a prospective narrative of encounters between teams or individuals. They provide a discussion of their individual and collective histories to help understand who might win and what the play might look like. Best of all they like to drag up some past incident, fight, controversies that provide a fulcrum for their prospective account, serving as a source of needle/conflict/motivation in the game to come.

Writers might also highlight one or two key individuals from a team who they think will make the difference. They may focus on one or two elements of an individual player’s style/form/strategy that they think will win or lose them the game – perhaps a tennis player’s smash which is working well, or a weak point that could be exploited.

Write a match preview which reviews past form of competitors, current state of mind and expectations, external and unusual circumstances, and likely course of play and implications of different outcomes but apply it to an everyday situation of your choice: write up in 100 words.
Checklist for match previews:

- What is the contest/event?
- Who are the participants?
- What is at stake – the early rounds of a competition/article/an attempt at a world record?
- What is the likely course of events given the form – might there be a chance of an upset or a surprising result?
- What are the players’ strengths and weaknesses?
- What is the players/teams state of mind/current form/potential strategies?
- Is the match a replay of some kind? Have the players/teams met before – what happened, did they get on or is their rancour left over from last time, scores to be settled?
- What’s your conclusion – will you predict the result or offer possibilities?

Contest between parents/students over:

- Getting to bed on time.
- A conversation over pocket money/allowance.
- Incomplete homework.
- Request to go to a party/gig/festival.
- Request for mobile phone upgrade.
- Money of new clothes.
- Talking to parents about a bad school report.
- Introducing new boy friend/girl friend to parents.

Students vs Teacher

- Handing in late homework.
- Late into lesson after break.
- Permission not to do games.
d. Over to you - Match Reports

Match reports are the key element of most sports pages. Deadlines require that writers complete and email their first draft of the report within a couple of minutes of the game/match being over. They then often attend press conferences and rewrite the report with the new quotes that come from it.

As you can imagine they are under a lot of pressure and need to be writing and rewriting all the way through a game – often having to deal with last minute twists and turns.

However, there is a standard format which most reporters stick to which makes the whole task much more manageable. You might like to get the class to look at a short match report and then compare it to the checklist below of standard items.

Standard features of the standard match report.

i. Headline

ii. Scoreline

Dependent on the sport being covered, football always gives the score and often the scorers and times.

iii. Byline

iv. Opening paragraph

This is all about manufacturing meaning. All match reports begin by trying to set the scene in some way to let the reader know that something was at stake or something special, meaningful happened.

There are different strategies for doing this:

• Comparing the players to similar sportsmen in their field.
• Focusing on the run of form or expectation of participants.
• Making a historical comparison to similar matches at a similar moment.
Other avenues that writers might think about are:

- Will the contest be even or one sided?
- Is there a clear favourite?
- Does the match mean more to one person/side than the other?
- Is there a grudge element – have they met before and disliked each other?

v. **Telling the story of the match**

- Having set up why it matters the report usually goes on describe the contest in more detail.
- Some may give a short précis of the overall feel of the game first; some leave that to the end.
- All use short paragraphs, broken down by the structure of the game – first and second half, first second third set.
- There will usually be one or two moments where a really special action/point/ moment occurs that get more detail.

vi. **Rounding things off**

- Usually a final thought that reflects on how the outcome of the game connects to the meanings/possibilities set up in the opening of the report.

vii. **Statistical Match details**

Again varies with sports and styles often team lists, more detailed stats, crowd numbers etc, officials etc...

e. **Over to you...**

One trick we tried which got a lot of laughs and a lot of writing was to stage a thumb wrestling match in the classroom, best of three.

Ask the students to write a match report of the thumb wrestling match in all its gory detail. Or get two students to play noughts and crosses on the board, best of three.
3. Tweet, Tweet

Twitter is a micro blogging and social networking website.

Account holders are restricted to 140 character messages or tweets which often include shortened URL links to other sites and can have pictures and images attached to them.

What makes twitter particularly interesting, as well as the demands of precision and conciseness, is that each account holder will have a list of others tweets that they follow (and which automatically appear in their account) and can build a network of other users who will check their tweets.

The search facility on twitter also allows one to get an instant sense of what is going on the site by seeing who is tweeting on a given issue at any moment.

As with Facebook and other sites, web pages and other peoples’ tweets can be “retweeted” and given massive and instant exposure through twitter.

One of the best and most interesting uses of twitter is for instant live reporting of an event – especially as the tweets can be composed and sent instantly from mobile phones. Of course, this can lead to a problem of disinformation and rumor spreading too.

What makes a good tweet? When you only have 140 characters, it demands a certain kind of style and writing and a quick sharp eye and wit that can turn what one sees into something interesting for the rest of the world.

a. Tweet Tweet

Hand out tweet cards to the class- say six each. Explain that we are going to be doing “manual tweets” – students are to going to watch a piece of video and tweet on it as they watch it. As with twitter a maximum of 140 characters is allowed (the computer will normally count these, so to keep it simple and prevent a lot of counting, say 20words maximum)

Quick discussion of what makes a good tweet.

My thoughts.

- Try and say just one thing well in each tweet
- Remember your readers/followers can’t see what you are doing – let them know early where you are and what you are looking at.
- You are watching a narrative unfold – think about yourself as an instant story teller –
Where there's drama and incident, make sure you let the world know

Where there is time and space, and you have an angle, use your tweet to offer an opinion.

Include questions, opinions and ideas as you go along. Your opinion matters, you are the person on the spot

Show the video of the first ten minutes of the movie offside in which a young Iranian girl, dressed as a man, tries to get into the men-only Azadi football stadium in Tehran to see Iran in a world cup qualifying game. Tell the class that they must imagine they are on the back of the bus, with their mobile phone, reporting. When they right each tweet they should hold it up above their head to show the rest of the class – as if we were all following their twitter stream.

b. Over to Haiku

Haiku is the closest classical poetry gets to twitter: short, sharp, structured poems, originally from Japan but now used in many cultures and languages.

In the classic form they are three lines long, have five syllables in the first and third line and seven in the second line. They should, normally include a reference to nature/environment...but we will live without that.

Begin by collectively writing a Haiku on the bus scene - just to illustrate the former and its possibilities

Something like...

The Girl on the Bus
Hides behind her cap and coat
Soft Skin betrays her

Show a clip from Zidane – 17 cameras trained on 1 player for a ninety minute game – ask students to take a few notes while they watch

Quick brainstorm for ideas, words, pictures, feel of the movie

Ask them know to write a Haiku on Zidane.
4. “Just how much did that goal mean to you?”

Cliché, Commentary and Subversion

This session will:

- Develop understanding of clichés and the techniques of commentary.
- Provide opportunity for students to write their own commentaries.

a. Cliché

To get them going a bit more you might like to watch snatches of commentary on You tube/BBC website, and invite students to identify and discuss the clichés or give students a copy of a tabloid sports article and ask them to find the clichés.

b. Commenting on Commentary

Sports commentary is the main way in which these clichés are produced, reproduced and spread into popular language - but it can be subverted....as in the Norwegian movie Home Field.

When you watch the movie listen out for the way in which commentary works, what roles are allocated to different speakers, the use of pace and tone etc...

Listen out too for the use of bizarre and clichéd language.

Now, show the Norwegian Movie – Home Field.

Key points

- Commentators tend to come in pairs – the anchor man who does the introduction and provides much of the running, what is actually going on kind of commentary and then there is and the colour man who offers reflection/etc. Usually this person is an ex sports star themselves who will offer professional authenticity and technical details too.
• Commentators, as with match reports will offer their own previews at the start of a show, examine past form, assess likelier outcomes, and determine what is at stake in the game.

• Commentators alter the tone, pace, pitch and volume of their voice to accompany the action, sometimes unintentionally. Do they ever take sides are they always neutral?

• Commentators, often without much basis in fact, are forever trying to describe and comment upon the emotional and psychological state of sports people - imagining them to be all washed up, at the end of their tether, drawing on experience, crumbling in the face of adversity...

c. Do it yourself.

In this exercise students craft and perform short drama in which they commentate on a shopping race, waiting for a bus, going to the dentist, doing homework, cooking a boiled egg, baking a cake….race/match/fight between two of them – anything allowed other than a real sport.

Work in groups of four:

• Two students to act as commentators – anchor and colour commentaries as above.

• Two students to act out/mime the event for them to commentate.

• Pupil groups to choose the ‘every-day activity’ they are going to write the commentary for.

• Agree what is going to happen (ask them to break it down into six stages – maybe even use a storyboard), so they can be clear about what they are commenting on and why.

• Write commentary.

• Rehearse and Perform.
5. **Keep Your Eye on the Ball:**

**Observation, Description and Reportage**

This session will:

- Underline the importance of close observation for good reportage and description.
- Encourage students to focus on the game as well as its context.
- Provide opportunity for the students to write a piece of description in the third person that can evoke a time, place, and moment (Dramatic Monologue).

**a. Playing the Game**

Discuss with students their experience of watching a sports event.

Initiate discussion about the difference between watching a game or individual sporting activity such as skateboarding and actually doing it.

Watch excerpts of team game e.g. football, hockey from BBC Website. Discuss crowds, players, atmosphere, sounds....

Show students a clip from a single person sport such as skiing, surfing, skate boarding... if you can get hold of it the following is a great film.

... **Dog Town and Z-Boys** - chapter 13 on the DVD is the strongest

The film shows us that Skateboarding and much of the language of slackerdom and extreme sports was invented in California. The scene has developed its own style of camera work, DIY movies – just take a look on you tube.

Dog town and Z-boys tells the story of the invention of modern skateboarding. It uses many of the techniques, camera angles and visual feel of this new cinematic language of sport and of course, the language used is quiet different form mainstream sports commentary.
Watch the excerpts and discuss what it must feel like to be doing that sport, consider atmosphere...five senses...

Now ask the students to write a dramatic monologue as if they were a character on one of the film clips. They could be a footballer player, a member of the crowd, a skateboarder, a coach, a camera man or just someone who happened to be there.

Ask them to focus on any moment of the film (game), but encourage them to pick a moment with some kind of drama or uncertainty: Just before a goal, going into the stadium, or as a skateboarder considering the moment that you realised it was possible to go up and turn, pivot on the edge of the pool.

Ask them to include as much description about the whole process, from the location, to the movement of playing using all five senses.

If students need help to structure their monologue you can ask them to write in response to the following questions...

**Before the event?**

What do you see around you? What can you hear? How do you feel? What do you want to happen next?

**During the event?**

What do you see around you? What do you hear? What do you feel now? What is happening...

**After the event?**

What do you see around you? What do you hear? What do you feel now? What do you want?
6. Poetry in Motion

This session will:

- Look at the relationship between sport and poetry.
- Get students to write a chant and a haiku.
- Get students to reflect upon the use of metaphor, rhythm and rhyme!

a. Sport as Poetry?

A standard cliché of commentary is to describe a play or a player as “poetry in motion”.

But as with many clichés there is a kernel of truth here; sport and poetry have all sorts of connections.

- Both have rhythm.
- Both may rise and fall in their tempo and acquire different beats.
- We take pleasure from their stops and starts and the sudden coming together of the unexpected – rhyme for example in poems, unusual movements that suddenly work in sport.
- Poems and sporting moments – condense meanings into a fraction of time and often require thought to extract those meanings – link back to the Muhammad Ali movie perhaps – why does that final punch and the fall of Foreman have so much emotional impact what is compressed into that single blow?

Ask the students to read/ or read aloud the poem The Listening Station which is very strong or sharp precise but unusual imagery in a standardised format.

The poet Chrissie Gittins said this of it: “Along the north coast of Devon there is a huge sphere on a hillside. It’s called a Listening Station. It listens out for radio waves bouncing off satellites.” She wondered what it would be like if there was a station on the radio, which instead of putting out sound, simply listened. What sounds would it hear?
The Listening Station
It hears the wind that rushes through the tress
Saying something of the sea,
It hears a moth leaving the ceiling
It hears the thin pages of a book close,
It hears a late key turn in the door.

It hears an egg flop into a mixing bowl,
It hears the crack of a bended knee
It hears a wash leather squeak down a window pane
It hears an apple eaten to its rotten core.

It hears a pencil dragged across tissue paper
It hears a pea-stick snapped in half
It hears a mouth leave another mouth,
It hears a lion (or is it a child?) roar?

By Chrissie Gittins

Now ask the class what the Listening Station would hear if were at sport event...

For example:

• If it was next to a skate park (it hears skin scrape off concrete).
• If it was at a horse race (it hears jockey’s wish in a horses ear).
• If it was at an empty cricket ground on a cold may morning (it hears the wet grass sigh).
• If it was next to a boxing ring (it hears a glove leave a blistered cheek).

Ask students to write their equivalent to the ‘Listening Station’ set at a sporting event of their own choice.

d. Write a Football Chant

Crowds are part of the sounds of sport, and their songs and chants, rhymes and rhythms are a key element of the spectacular.

There are many standard tunes and rhymes that fans use and adapt.

This is one about England striker Peter Crouch when playing for Liverpool – Peter is 6ft 7in.
He’s tall.
He’s red.
His feet stick out the bed

Peter Crouuuuuch
Peter Crouuuuuuch

Note the structure:

- Two lines of two syllables.
- The third line has six syllables.
- Lines 2 and 3 rhyme.
- Lines four and five are the name – sung as long and then a short phrase. If you have along surname to deal with you need to be creative; I could be David G or Goold – blaat.

Have a go at writing one about yourself, your siblings, and your pet.

e. Small is Beautiful: Sports Haikus

Haiku is a form of Japanese poetry, consisting of 17 more (or syllables), in three metrical phrases of 5, 7, and 5 syllables respectively.

Japanese Haiku typically contain a kigo, or seasonal reference, and a kireji or verbal caesura or pause. In English we sometimes use a cut (sometimes indicated by a punctuation mark) paralleling the Japanese use of kireji, to contrast and compare, implicitly, two events, images, or situations.

In Japanese, haiku are traditionally printed in a single vertical line, while haiku in English usually appear in three lines, to parallel the three metrical phrases of Japanese haiku.

Previously called hokku, haiku was given its current name by the Japanese writer Masaoka Shiki at the end of the 19th century.

There are lots of ways you can link haiku writing and sport. We have done it using the movie Zidane.

Its art house cinema meets football with seventeen cameras all trained on Zidane for one game – Real Madrid vs. Real Zaragoza in 2005.
You could show students five minute section and get them to focus on his face; his calmness and sudden anger, his insane concentration and other worldliness, his detachment form the crowd. Then ask them to write a haiku about him or his state of mind.

Remind them that Haiku needs to be elusive, slightly off the point, atmospheric...

Example...for Zidane...after he finally cracks his first and only smile in the movie after about 78 minutes of the game, I wrote this.

Warrior Monk. Your
Set cloistered silence cracks.
Molten gold runs out.

Appendix: Some Rather Good Football Chants

'Ooh aah Cantona, say ooh ahh Cantona!'
Brilliantly simple and effective. This chant was started by Leeds fans, nicked by Man U fans when King Eric crossed the Pennines.

'When the ball hits your head and you sit in row Z, thats Zamora.'
Sung about aimless Bobby Zamora to the tune of 'That's Amore'. Lyrical genius.

'Who ate all the pies, who ate all the pies? You fat bastard, you fat bastard, you ate all the pies!'
A timeless classic to the tune of Knees up Mother.
'Park Park, wherever you may be
You eat dogs in your home country
It could be worse, you could be Scouse
Eating rats in your council house'

More black humour, again from Man U fans. Korea's Park Ji Sung must feel honoured.

'You've got Di Canio, we've got your stereo…'

Liverpool fans being post-modern, deconstructing their own stereotype. Sung at West Ham fans, who would often boast 'We've got Di Canio!'

'Ten men went to lift, went to lift Frank Lampard, ten men and their forklift truck went to lift Frank Lampard'

A cunning variation on 'Ten men went to mow', aimed at Fat Frank by opposition fans.

'We're gonna deep-fry your pizzas!'

A one-off moment of inspiration from Scotland fans, who threatened Italian fans with a culinary fate worse than death. Sung to the tune of Guantanamera.

'Neville Neville, your play is immense
Neville, you play in defence
Neville Neville, like Jacko you're bad,
Neville Neville, the name of your dad'

Sung to the tune of David Bowie's Rebel Rebel, to honour Gary and Phil Neville.

'Don't blame it on the Biscan
Don't blame it on the Hamman
Don't blame it on the Finnan
Blame it on Traore...

He just can't, he just can't, he just can't control his feet'

Pure genius to honour the hapless Djimi Traore during his time at Liverpool. Sung to the tune of 'Blame it on the Boogie'.

'Two Andy Goram's, there's only two Andy Goram's!'

Political correctness went out of the window when it was reported that larger-than-life keeper Andy Goram was diagnosed with schizophrenia.
7. **Studying Form:**

**The Wonderful World of the Sports Reference Book**

This session will:

- Give students the opportunity to write in the style of reference books.
- Manage information and present it according to the genre.

**1. Encyclopaedias and Reference Books**

Modern sport is in part defined by its predilection for record keeping and statistical precision – no one was really watching the clock at the ancient Olympics and there was no league table for the coliseum.

Sport loves statistical information and compilation and comparison. Sports books are forever listing championships, records, goals scored, and times run etc.... They also like to compile information of a more subjective or social kind – when were teams founded how a player does or a team of one era compare with their opponents now or with the same team in the past.

This is the stuff of sports reference books and encyclopaedias.

Give students photocopied examples from a range sports encyclopaedias and references books- the ones listed below may prove useful.

Ask them to think about:

- What information is being presented?
- What are the principles of data organisation (A-Z’s lists, club by club, focus on individuals or competitions etc...?)
- What graphical devices are used, if any, to help present data?
- What data isn’t available?
Other ways of playing with these books might be to:

Look at an entry for a sport in a number of the different style reference books. What are the key pieces of information required?

**Key Points**

- Simple description of game.
- Account of origins of sport.
- Account of development of the sport – how it spread around the world, who plays it, how has it changed?
- Has it become professional and popular or remained amateur and marginal?
- Short description of major championships, great teams or individuals, interesting controversies.

Look at the entry for one club say Manchester United in two different books- How do they compare?

- Note all the subsections and data they present.
- How is the club’s story told?
- Think about the different ways in which the information is presented.
2. **Over to you**

**Options:**

Ask students to choose a sports person or team and write an entry for them in the style of one of the encyclopaedias or reference books.

Give students a bundle of info on a given sport - one they might not know much about and ask them to write an entry for an encyclopedia.

Make up an imaginary sport and write an encyclopaedia entry for it.

Make up an imaginary football club and write an entry for it in the style of the Rough Guide.
8. **Sports Interviews**

This session will provide students with the opportunity:

- To develop an understanding of effective interview questions.
- To write an interviews (not a Q and A session).

The interview is one of the standard forms that sports journalism takes. One reporter interviews on sports person/coach/administrator/agent whatever. Sometimes the interview will be written up mainly as reported speech, but increasingly writers seek to use the interview material to weave a bigger story around the subject giving us more details on their background, their sporting performances, etc...

Most interviews will have a photo, they might also have a statistical box with a resume of key moments in their career or numbers of goals scores/matches won etc...

*If you can see if there is someone in your school who plays a sport at county, regional or national level invite them to be interviewed by the class.*

**Preparation before the interview:**

Discuss with your students the potential purpose of your sports interview – is it to...

- Learn more about the player – what they have achieved, how they have achieved it – including skills, attitudes and preparation.
- How they see themselves as a player and as a normal person: life style.
- Attitude to the game (benefits and drawbacks) and other players – key teams?
- Future their hopes and aspirations? Their fears?

Ask what sort of information would the reader like to know? For example:
- Background detail of interviewee (especially if it sheds light upon their performance and attitude to the game).
- Where they were born.
- Family.
- School.

Ask about factors that got them into the sport:

- How they were attracted to the game?
- When and how did they start playing it?
- How did they achieve such high standards; including training practice, training facilities, developing form, relationship with and role of coach and finally relationship with team members?

Other issues:

- How they see themselves as players? Possibly most effectively discussed via questions relating to past games as well as current training and its effect on their life outside the sport.
- Gratifications – what are the rewards of playing at this level?
- Hopes for the future both within their sport and the rest of life.
- Interviewees thoughts on the role of sport for ‘ordinary’ people? Would they encourage them to play and if so why?