
UNIT 11 SPORTS REPORTING

Structure

- 11.0 Introduction
- 11.1 Learning Outcomes
- 11.2 Sports in India
- 11.3 Sports Reporting In Indian Media
 - 11.3.1 Growing Sports Coverage in India
 - 11.3.2 Print Media and Sports Reporting
 - 11.3.3 Radio & TV and Sports Reporting
 - 11.3.4 Online Media and Sports Reporting
- 11.4 Writing Sports News Reports
- 11.5 Sports Reporter : Skills and Qualities
 - 11.5.1 'Do's and don'ts for a sports reporter
- 11.6 Trends in Sports Journalism
- 11.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 11.8 Further Readings
- 11.9 Check Your Progress: Possible Answers

11.0 INTRODUCTION

Sport Accord, the association of most of the large international sports federations says that an activity to qualify as 'sport' should have an element of competition, be in no way damaging to a living creature, should not bank on an equipment provided by a single supplier (excluding proprietary games such as arena football) and should not rely on any "luck" element specifically designed into the sport. According to the Oxford English dictionary defines sports as, "...an activity involving physical exertion and skill in which an individual or team competes against another or others for entertainment."

Sports enhances our physical, mental, and spiritual health. It has the potential to unite and reconcile people of different colours, ethnicities, religions, and cultures. While ancient sports were primarily instinctive and recreational, modern sports are primarily competitive.

In the last few years, however, India has been working in many ways to build a strong sports environment and sports culture. Multiple groups are working to get kids and teens involved in sports and physical activities by making it easier for people from all socioeconomic backgrounds to play sports and get to them. People are setting up sports schools to meet the demand for good sports facilities and world-class coaching. Media also wants better policies for sports.

Today, there are a lot more people watching and playing sports than there were a few years ago. Along with this, we can see that there is more sports coverage in newspaper, TV, and the web. Also, a lot of movies and

commercials are being made about sports. Sports events are held on a regular basis. Sports agencies, academies, and manufacturing businesses all hire PROs. Because of all these changes, there are a lot of new trends and different kinds of news and stories about sports.

In this Unit, we will talk about how sports in India have changed over time and give a brief history of sports in India. We will also talk about the benefits of sports to society, the growing sports business, and, most importantly, how Indian media cover sports. We'll talk about how sports reporting is changing and find out what skills and traits a sports reporter needs.

11.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After going through this Unit, you will be able to:

- understand the expansion and growth of sports in India;
- describe the contemporary scenario of sports reporting in different media;
- explain the qualities and skills required in a good sports reporter; and
- discuss the emerging trends in sports reporting.

11.2 SPORTS IN INDIA

Cricket is one of the most popular games in India. Players, managers, and people who talk about the game on TV are treated like celebrities in the country, especially among young people. And cricket has been bigger than other games for a long time. Other games have also popularity. Now many professional leagues like the Hockey India League, Pro Kabaddi League, Indian Super League, Indian Wrestling League, Indian Badminton League, Indian Golf League, Indian Volleyball League and Indian Racing League have started. The feeling of loss has been wiped away by the medals won at the Commonwealth Games, Asian Games and Olympics. Cricket is a proof that wins and medal counts are what make a sport powerful and popular.

In order to win more medals at international competitions, policymakers are trying to in still sports ideals and a sports culture in the society. They do this by encouraging young people with skills and talent and by making sports a required part of the curriculum from elementary school to university. The government has added more money to its sports budget. This backs up the idea that India is quickly changing from a "sports-loving" or "sports-watching" country to a "sports-playing" country.

11.3 SPORTS REPORTING IN INDIAN MEDIA

The thrill of winning and the pain of losing, the drama of battle or the making of champions—sports reporting is the gathering, putting together, and sharing with the public of stories, events, issues, and happenings in the world of sports. A sports reporter has to cover, write about, and talk about a lot of different things. These include basic game-centered stories like turning points, big moments, and major glitches in sporting events, key decisions of captains and coaches, etc., as well as fights, controversies, legal and

investigative scoops, sensational things that happen in the lives of players, and many other bits of information that sports fans look forward to in a variety of stories.

With the growth of the sports business, there are now more people who have a stake in it. Local, regional, national, and foreign groups are putting on a lot of events and tournaments for different games. The government has realized how important sports are and is trying to get more people to start playing sports as early as grade school. Sports and sports laws are debated and talked about by people of all backgrounds and jobs. Several sports-focused TV and radio stations, newspapers, magazines, and websites have started to meet this need for sports news and fun.

In this part, we'll look at how sports are getting more coverage in India.

11.3.1 Growing Sports Coverage in India

In many places where people love sports and play them, sports journalism is just as important as other kinds of journalism. There are a lot of people who watch and read sports media. In the past, sports were called the "toy beat" or "non-serious department" to make fun of them, but that is no longer the case. There are now more sports pages in journals than there used to be. Media outlets have a sports desk and sports correspondents who go to all the big national and foreign sports events to report on them. Along with cricket, other sports are now being covered and written about in Indian sports news, which is a big change for the better. Local games are also talked about on sports channels in other languages, like Star Sports Tamil, and in the "city" sections of national newspapers.

11.3.2 Print Media and Sports Reporting

M.V. Kamath in the July-September 2008 issue of *Media Mimansa*, states that S. Sadanand's 'Free Press Journal' was the first newspaper in India to devote an entire page to sports with the well-known cricket commentator A.F.S. Talyarkhan as the sports editor. In late thirties, the Bombay (now Mumbai) edition of *Times of India* started a distinct sports page. Though a few magazines and a few newspapers were publishing news related to sports, yet it was only in the post-independence era that the idea of a regular sports page took importance in Indian newspapers.

Rangaswamy Parthasarathy in "A Hundred Years of *The Hindu*" calls Kasturi Gopalan, the publisher, as the father of sports page for allotting a distinct section to sports in a daily newspaper for the first time, helped by Murugesamudaliar, sportsman in college days and the first sports writer of *The Hindu*. In fact, the sports journal 'Sports and Past Time' was also published by the same publication in 1947. The Ananda Bazar Patrika group in mid 1970s published 'Sports World' from Calcutta (now Kolkata). Another worthy mention would be the Chennai based fortnightly magazine 'Sportstar' which is being published for the past forty years now and has changed from tabloid to magazine format and vice versa quite a time in its history.

Few other successful sports magazines in India are- ‘Golf Digest India’, ‘Cricket Samrat’, ‘Bike India’, ‘Cricinfo magazine’, etc. Kishore Bhimani, K. Sundar Rajan, Moti Nandi, V. M. Balachandran and T. D. Parthasarathy are some of the notable sports journalists of the print media. After the advent of television the focus of print media shifted from ‘What’ to ‘Why’ factor and the intricate reporting format.

Activity - 1

Analysing the Role of Sports Photography in Sports Journalism

In this activity, you will gauge the importance of sports photography in sports journalism by examining the sports section of a newspaper and determining the space devoted to pictures. You will need a physical or digital newspaper, a ruler or measuring tool, and a calculator to calculate the proportions of images and text to highlight the visual impact of sports photography in conveying stories and emotions to readers.

11.3.3 Radio & TV and Sports Reporting

During the mid twentieth century when around 80 percent people lived in villages and depended on agriculture for their living, Radio was the most apt media for them for definite reasons. Illiteracy was a roadblock for the rural populace to access print media while electricity expenses were a hindrance to access television. Radio was not only portable and inexpensive, but it also allowed the liberty to listen to while people worked on the fields. In India, ‘live’ cricket commentary was heard in 1934 for the first time during the Bombay Quadrangular — a tournament played between teams representing the Hindus, the Muslims, the Parsis and the Europeans.

However, sports broadcasting over Radio took off only in 1960s in the country. Initially, the broadcast of sports commentary in English made it difficult for the common people to understand and enjoy the programme. But Radio sports broadcasting in India got revolutionized with the onset of sports commentary in Hindi and availability of low cost transistors in the 60s. In the absence of television, internet or mobile mediums, Radio remained the unchallenged favorite for sports broadcasting for decades. In the year 2018, India’s first Radio sports channel was launched which covered almost all Olympic games through talk shows, news bulletins, audio documentaries, live commentaries, phone-in etc. The shows, broadcast on this Radio channel in Hindi and English, can be reached 24X7 through mobile app named ‘Sports Flashes’.

The Asian Games of 1982 was hosted by India and the games were held in Delhi. It was a matter of prestige for India to cover and broadcast the games over television. Colour television was introduced in the country in the same year. Just a year later, India won cricket world cup of 1983. To promote television viewing, the then government reduced excise duty on television manufacturing in the country, leading to price drop of television sets. People started getting TV sets to their houses. Doordarshan, the national broadcaster had monopoly over the broadcast of matches and sports events for several

years. In the eighties, the DD show “The World of Sports”, broadcast at 04:30 pm every Sunday was quite popular. It featured talks on cricket, hockey, football, tennis and others. In the year 1999, Doordarshan launched DD Sports, which has been promoting domestic sports on the free-to-air platform. Some of its popular sports programmes are “Sports Konnect”, “Indian Khel League- Yeh India ka KhelHai”, “Guru-Shishya Parampara” and “Fit Rahe India- Healthy living, Wealthy living”.

Some of the popular private sports channels in India are- Star Sports , Star Sports Hindi and Star Sports Tamil, Sony Ten, Neo Prime and Neo Sports, DSport, Jio Sports etc.

11.3.4 Reporting Sports in Online Media

In February 1996, rediff.com began ball-by-ball text commentary. Adapting the digital platform is no longer a strategy but it has become rather a necessity for print and other media forms.

Indian online sports reporting has experienced significant growth in recent years, with numerous websites and mobile applications dedicated to covering various sporting events and activities. This expansion can be attributed to the increased interest in sports, the rise in internet penetration, and the proliferation of smartphones in India.

The online sports reporting landscape in India is characterized by a mix of traditional news outlets with dedicated sports sections, specialized sports websites, and social media channels that focus on sports. The content ranges from live match updates, in-depth articles, analysis, and interviews to multimedia features like videos, podcasts, and photo galleries.

Several technology enabled sports news platforms are producing internet content, covering various games and events. Today most of the sporting events are telecast online via HOTSTAR and SONY LIV app over mobile phones. Several sports web portals, blogs and sports news websites have become popular amongst sports lovers.

11.4 WRITING SPORTS NEWS REPORTS

Writing sports stories requires proper background research and planning. The story is weaved keeping in mind the following:

- a) the medium through which the story shall be broadcast or published; and
- b) the expectations and preferences of the target audience or readers of the story.

Writing sports stories has four main steps:

- generation of a story idea;
- understanding the issue;
- collection of data, statistics, statements of major stakeholders, and
- writing

Headline, lead and body are three main parts of a sports report or story. There is no fixed formulae or template to write a great story. The format and style depends on the subject chosen. While a sports event or match result story will mostly have 5 W, 1 H format, a profile or human interest story talking about struggle, behavior, opinion, lifestyle will have an elaborate feature style.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: 1) Use the space given below for your answer

2) Compare your answer with those given at the end of this Unit.

1. List your five favorite sports programmes on television.

.....
.....
.....

2. Name five best sports websites/apps according to you.

.....
.....
.....

3. Write brief note on a few sports magazines published in India.

.....
.....
.....

11.5 SPORTS REPORTER :SKILLS AND QUALITIES

Sports reporters tell us about all kinds of local, national, and foreign sporting events and news. He or she gathers, puts together, and shares knowledge about current sports events and issues. Reporters are essential to any news organization. People often call them the "foot soldiers" of a media company. In today's age of journalism, sports is a unique beat. So, let us take a look at the basic skills and qualities of a sports reporter.

- **Experience of Sports or Passion for sports:** A sports reporter needs to have experienced the sweat and dirt on the field. Even though there have been great commentators who weren't players, having played the sport gives you a deeper understanding of it. It helps the reporters figure out who did the best and who did the worst, which makes their story more interesting to read for the people. As a former player, the writer knows how games work and what the rules are.
- **Knowledge about the economy of Sports:** In the era of globalization, a lot of multinational capital is involved in the sports industry. A sports reporter should understand different aspects of the economy of the sports ecosystem.

- **Understanding of the sports terminology, lingo and vocabulary:** Every sport has its unique terminology. The terms 'push' and 'scoop' have different meanings. The terms 'mount' and 'dismount' in gymnastics cannot be replaced with the terms 'climb' and 'fall'. There are specific terms for the position of players and different color cards of penalty. Similarly, the idioms and phrases for tennis and badminton are different. Knowledge of the technical terms for shots, positions, actions and acquaintance with the stories and idioms for various sports is important for a good sports reporter.
- **Good relations with the sports fraternity:** Friendly relationships with the sports community (players, coaches, and leaders in sports federations, associations, academies, and other related sports institutions) help sports reporters find reliable sources and find out about untold stories.
- **Command over language:** A sports writer must be able to talk in a clear and straightforward way. He or she shouldn't use jargon and should make sure to use correct language and punctuation. A writer must make sure that what they say is clear, logical, correct, complete, and short.
- **Nose for the news, ears to the ground:** As the sports business in India grows, more and more sports-related problems are popping up. Investigative stories about sports crimes, fights, and controversies, gender discrimination, and policy choices in sports need to be done quickly and followed up on often. A sports writer needs to know the difference between "news" and "information" in order to do their job well.
- **Creativity and curiosity:** A good sports reporter is always interested in what's going on. When you want to know more, you look for good stories. Creativity comes from trying to see things from different points of view. We often see that even though different newspapers or TV stations report the same event or win, one "out-of-the-box" headline or angle is what draws most people to it.
- **Knowledge of sports laws:** A sports reporter should know about labour, antitrust, gender discrimination, trademarks, copyrights, contract, tort, and relevant laws. Rather than being a discrete area of law, 'sports law' is often seen as the application of various areas of law to the sports industry. If a sports reporter knows about the above rules, s/he will be better able to follow the legal issues in the sports world.
- **Ability of multitasking:** There are strict deadlines for getting news and sending reports and stories. Many times, there are several sports events that need to be covered on the same day. In this age of "breaking news," a sports reporter needs to be "jack of all trades and master of some" to keep up. One must be good with technology, know how to use a camera on their own, be able to edit and package shows, create pages for newspapers and magazines, and be able to give good presentations.

- **Ability to understand the perspective of audience/readers:** A good sports reporter understands his/her target audience or readers.
- **Truth and objectivity:** It might be hard for a sports fan to watch a game without taking a side. But sports journalists can't afford to take sides when they write stories or reports. In the long run, people will believe a journalist who is honest and fair. Information must be checked and rechecked, and a report must be based on facts. People will stop accepting a sports reporter's reports and stories if he or she is biased.

11.5.1 'Do's and don'ts for a Sports Reporter

Some 'do's and don'ts for a sports reporter are as follows:

- Use short sentences.
- Use correct grammar and punctuation.
- Use appropriate sports terminologies.
- Be creative and think 'out-of-the-box'.
- Remember the 5 Ws and 1 H.
- Prefer the inverted pyramid writing style for hard news.
- Avoid jargons.
- Remember the 5 Cs of communication - clear, coherent, correct, comprehensive and concise.
- Do not use many numbers in your reports.
- Check facts and be accurate.
- Authenticate reports with statements of authorities.
- Get firsthand information. Watch matches before filing your report.
- Keep yourself updated.
- Place ethics at the foremost in the order of importance.
- Choose the format and style of report/article as per the issue and theme

Check Your Progress 2

Note: 1) Use the space given below for your answer

2) Compare your answer with those given at the end of this Unit.

1. Why are sources important for a sports reporter?

.....
.....
.....

2. How important is the knowledge of sports law for a sports reporter. Explain

.....
.....
.....

3. What are the important qualities of a sports reporter ?

.....

.....

.....

11.6 TRENDS IN SPORTS REPORTING

Sports journalism today goes well beyond just reporting on sporting events. It discusses the effects of the course of events and a variety of topics, including gender equality, the law, trends, scandals and controversies, diplomatic choices, public opinion, the formulation of policy, and the economics of the sports market. Also, sport is so dynamic a stream that the trends change very fast. Be it designing, reporting, commentary or live streaming, let us take a look at the emerging trends in sports reporting:

- Sports journalism is increasingly turning into a specialized stream from being a small part of a news bulletin, to 30-60 minutes shows based on specific games like- ‘Cricket Controversy’ or ‘KissaKicket Ka’ to full-fledged 24X7 sports channels, or entire magazines devoted to a specific game. Sports beat has become an important area of journalism in the last decade or so.
- Sports journalism is now an expensive affair. The amount of money going into sports journalism has expanded along with the growth of sponsorships and advertisements. Today's sports coverage includes high-tech microphones, lenses, outfits, and accessories.
- Sports getting space on the front page of newspapers and featuring during prime time on television news channels is a positive trend.
- Media outlets sensationalize sporting events, controversies, statements made by famous players, and other details of their personal lives to increase their TRP or circulation. Sporting victories frequently sounds like war victories in the headlines.
- It is quite encouraging that today we see news of domestic sports, inter-university games, and sports news from cities etc. being covered by the mainstream media.
- Sports columns and write ups by renowned players and coaches are becoming popular amidst sports lovers.
- Players' social media tweets and postings about current events, problems, or their personal lives are read by large audiences and frequently make news.
- ‘Athlete Driven Media’ is a trend quite popular in western countries today and is catching up in India as well. In this concept, sports persons directly share their take on an issue through social media instead of approaching mainstream media to cover their statements. This kind of ‘no filter’, ‘uncut’ communication of sports persons directly with masses is certainly in fashion.

- With social media and open publishing forums, the trend of sports enthusiasts analyzing and writing stories is on the rise.
- The revamp of sports other than cricket and traditional Indian sports is quite an encouraging phenomena today.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: 1) Use the space given below for your answer

2) Compare your answer with those given at the end of this Unit.

1. What points should be kept in mind while writing sports reports or stories ?

.....
.....
.....

11.7 LET US SUM UP

We discussed the history of sports journalism in India briefly. We learned the advantages of sports for our bodies, minds, and spirits, and we examined how the Indian sports business has grown in the twenty-first century. We discussed the growth and variety of sports coverage in print (newspapers and magazines) media, electronic (radio and television) media and online media (blogs, websites, e-papers). The qualities and skills required in a sports reporter were also elaborated in the Unit. We also went into great detail on the new trends in sports reporting. We also discussed the important considerations for sports reporting and writing.

11.8 FURTHER READINGS

Lambert, C. M. (2018). Digital Sports Journalism. Routledge.

Reinardy, S., & Wanta, W. (2015). The essentials of sports reporting and writing. Routledge.

11.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

1. Answer this question as per your choice.
2. Answer this question as per your opinion.
3. Sports magazines published in India:- ‘Cricket Samrat’ is a Hindi language magazine published since 1980 is exclusively about cricket. ‘Golf Digest India’ covers the game of golf. ‘Bike India’ is based on racing and ‘Kushti’ is based on wrestling. ‘The Himalayan Journal’ is an Indian annual magazine in the category of climbing and mountaineering.

Check Your Progress 2

1. Sources are extremely important for a sports reporter. Credible sources help in getting leads for stories. A sports journalist has to maintain good relations with players, coaches, lawyers, audiences, peer journalists, federation and association officials etc. to obtain authentic sports stories.
2. The knowledge of sports laws is extremely important for a sports reporter. Today sports journalism is much beyond writing about win and loss. It is more about analysis and issues. Be it gender discrimination, doping and drug abuse or controversies and cases like breach of contract etc., sports reporter cannot write on these matters until and unless one understands sports law.

3. The important qualities of a sports reporter are as follows:

Creativity and confidence; Knowledge and passion for sports; Command over sports vocabulary, rules, technicalities; Knowledge of sports law; Good relations with stakeholders of sports; Truth and honesty; Eye for detail and accuracy; Nose for the news and ears to the ground (News Sense); Understanding of sports economy; and In-depth understanding of issues related to sports industry.

Check Your Progress 3

1. Some of the key points to be kept in mind while writing sports reports or stories are truth, detail, rules, creativity, accuracy, fairness, target audience, medium, 5 Cs, 5 Ws, 1 H, etc.