



Newspaper Sports Writing

IHSA Sample Prompt 2006

Block B

Students will have interview information on a person who is involved in a sport and then write a story based on the given material. In addition to well-written and organized articles, judges will be looking for the use of an interesting lead that pulls the reader into the story, accurate details about the information given by the subject, and proper style and mechanics.

You are a staff writer of Illinois High School's The Standard. Your editor has assigned you to write a story about the new SnoCross Racing event.

Be sure to put your contestant number in the upper right-hand corner of each page of your entry. Do not put your name on it. If you do, your entry will be disqualified.

DIRECTIONS

From the information given below, students are to write a news sports article based on good journalistic practice and standards for their local high school newspaper. Students will be judged as to how well written and organized their article is. Students will also be judged on use of interesting leads, accurate details about the information given in the prompt and proper styles and mechanics.

DESCRIPTION

School: Illinois High School (IHS), 123 Maxwell Way Avenue, America, Illinois (518) 554-2334 (518) 554-2339 (fax)
www.illinoishs.edu

Mascot: Add A. Tude

School Colors: Orange and Blue

Location: America, Illinois

School Size: 789 (9th-12th grades)

School Newspaper Name: The Standard

ASSIGNMENT

You have been assigned to write a story about the new SnoCross Racing team. This story will appear in the Friday, May 11th edition of The Standard. Use the background information provided. Use your reporting instincts to write the story. You must decide what facts should be included and in what order they should be presented.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Interviewee: John Kater

Focus of article: SnoCross Racing

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DETAILS OF STORY

- Season runs from January to March
- 8 students compete regularly
- Race on Snowmobiles
- Sport got to be more respected after becoming an event at the Winter Games
- Local races are held at Wauconda on Rt. 12 at the Golf Farm
- Racers focus on status of their 'sled' (snowmobile)
- Course changes each round, so strong focus is needed.
- Semi pro racing has been happening for 8 years
- While they don't officially race for their school, most wear school colors when racing.
- Snocross supplies are becoming a big industry.

QUOTES

- "I rode my first full sized sled when I was six." (John Kater SnoCross Racing participant)
- "I was thrilled that I placed 4th against semi pro racers last week at the tournament. This told me that I was finally doing something right." (John Kater SnoCross Racing participant)
- "Besides being really fast, my sleds suspension is flawless and I trust it to jump really big". (John Kater SnoCross Racing participant)
- "We are really happy John has found a sport he enjoys. His dedication in practice, and keeping his sled in top condition has please his mother and I." (George Kater John's Dad.)

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Block A

Students will have interview information on a person who is involved in a sport and then write a story based on the given material. In addition to well-written and organized articles, judges will be looking for the use of an interesting lead that pulls the reader into the story, accurate details about the information given by the subject, and proper style and mechanics.

Word count: 350

ASSIGNMENT

You have been assigned to write a story on Steven Conrad, the basketball coach.

School: Abraham High School (AHS), 2715 McGraw Drive, Middleland, Illinois
(518) 554-2334 (518) 554-2339 (fax) www.abrahamhs.edu

Mascot: The Loggers

School Colors: Orange and Blue

Location: Middleland, Illinois

School Size: 789 (9th-12th grades)

School Newspaper Name: The Standard

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Steven "Sparky" Conrad has been coaching at Abraham High School for 25 years. He is a graduate of Eastern Illinois University from the history department and has master's degree in coaching from the University of Illinois. In his years at AHS he has taught all levels of social studies, but for the past nine years he has taught American Government, a senior-level class. He served as interim athletic director from 1996-1999. During his time at AHS his varsity teams have placed first in the I-70 Conference seven times, and reached at least the .500 level 17 times. Four times the team advanced in the IHSA state tournament, winning the state tournament in 2001. Sixteen of his players have gone on to play basketball at the college level, either at the community college, Division II or I college levels. His most famous player was Michael "Stretch" Cunningham, who was an All-American for the University of Kentucky. Three of his former players are now high school coaches, one for a boys' team and two for girls' teams. For the past two years, the AHS Loggers finished last in the conference, going 8-15 this year and 10-17 last year. Last night, amid rumors that had been spread all season, the Todd County School Board has fired Conrad. The vote was 4-3. Conrad can still teach in the social studies department. There is no word on what will happen to the assistant coach, Thomas Piercy, a former AHS player, who has been Conrad's assistant since 1994.

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QUOTES

Steven Conrad, coach: These past four years have been a downhill slide for the kids, but I think firing may have been a bit extreme. This is always cyclical. Sometimes there are good years and sometimes its not so good. But the kids do the best they can. Over the years there have always been rumblings whenever there is a bad year. I think there has been strong pressure from some parents, and for some reason the board buckled this time. I am, of course, very disappointed. My family and I have invested our entire career with this athletic program.

School Board President Sarah Craig: I have known Sparky for many years and I have the utmost respect for him as a coach, teacher and as a man. But the time has come for a change at AHS. We thank Sparky for his years of service and we wish him the best of luck in whatever he decides to do. We hope he continues to teach here in the social studies department.

Board member Joyce Tingley, one of the four yes votes: Of course this was a tough decision. Mr. Conrad was my history teacher when I went to AHS. But this was not about his teaching. It was about his coaching. We thought it was about time for a change. Two years at that level is unacceptable.

Joey Bernham, senior point guard: I don't see how anyone can blame Coach for this year. We struggled, but we tried, and we really improved over the year. I think the upcoming teams will do great, and now Coach won't be there to get the credit for the work he did with the JV.

Kurt Zeichner, father of sophomore forward Zachary Zeichner: I have been frustrated all year, and I know a lot of parents and fans have been, too. I think the board made the right decision, and I am glad they listened to our concerns. Now I hope they bring in a real aggressive coach to turn the program around.

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DESCRIPTION OF SCHOOL

School: Abraham High School (AHS), 2715 McGraw Drive, Middleland, Ill. (518) 554-2334 (518) 554-2339 (fax) www.abrahamhs.edu

Mascot: The Loggers

School Colors: Brown and White

Location: Middleland, Ill.

School Size: 789 (9th-12th grades)

School Newspaper: The Standard

Yearbook Name: The Annual

Radio Station Call Letters: WMIL

DIRECTIONS

You are a sports writer for the Abraham High School's The Standard (Middleland, Ill.). You are to write a story based on the interview information listed below. In addition to well-written and organized articles, judges will be looking for the use of an interesting lead that pulls the reader into the story, accurate details about the information given, and proper style and mechanics. The word limit will be 400 words. You are permitted to use an AP Stylebook and dictionaries.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

"Snowmageddon 2010," the record-shattering snowfall, dropped about 22 inches of snow during last weekend, causing problems for coaches' and athletes' schedules.

Winter sports are in the middle of conference and regional tournaments and spring sports are having tryouts. Teams and volunteers pitched in to shovel the snow covering the athletic fields and the track. However, the space remained largely covered.

Without fields to play on, teams were forced to split time in the main and auxiliary gyms and boys' varsity baseball showed up before school to fit in part of their tryout.

The coaches' decision process was also strained. With such conditions, some coaches had a hard time evaluating the players. There are a lot of new coaches in multiple sports and they had to figure out how to handle the situations. Some did not know the players. Baseball coach Justin Janis is in his first year as head coach. He came to AHS from Iowa. Softball coach Warren Kasper is also new. He came to AHS from Kentucky.

Athletes spent months preparing for spring, in many cases hitting the track and scaling the bleachers only a week after the fall season ended. But when the snow came, training was halted in the middle of the crucial that lead up to tryouts.

Being cooped up inside because of the blizzard for nearly two weeks, athletes' pre-season workout routines were interrupted. They had to find other ways to get in shape.

Schedules for spring sports have been delayed as well. Teams may not be able to complete their non-conference schedules traditionally at the beginning of the season, so the season will be abbreviated.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION, CONTINUED

QUOTES

senior baseball player Nick Ward

- Coach Janis took the initiative and got us a field. We probably wouldn't have had that kind of leadership in the past.

baseball coach Justin Janis

- The snow has had a major effect on our tryouts and season. We would love for each player to have about three intrasquad scrimmages to prove themselves in a game situation. This year we will be lucky if the players have one scrimmage on the field.

junior softball player Amanda Bailey

- We couldn't work out outside before tryouts, so I'm not as well conditioned as I'd like to be. I ran on the treadmill and lifted weights on my own to make up for it. I tried to set an example for the others.

junior baseball player Walker Webster

- We couldn't hit or throw outside so our arms aren't as warmed up as they usually are. I don't think my tryout was as good as it could have been.

softball coach Manny Bradley

- And the biggest concern is that we have this abbreviated schedule. We use those pre-conference games to fine-tune our skills and learn to play as a team. Now we have to go right into the season and conference play with no real warm-ups. I think that will really hurt us.