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Abstract:

"In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content"

Sports journalism is hot. Not just ordinary cool hot, but to steal a phrase from ESPN's Dan Patrick, en fuego.

A 2007 Penn State University study reported that of 384 universities more than 40% offer at least one sports media-related course. At that time, 14 universities offered a minor, certificate, emphasis or a full program in sports media ([Hardin, 2007](#)). Two years after that study, the number of sports journalism programs continues to increase. In December, the University of Indiana hired *Baltimore Sun* Editor and Senior Vice President Tim Franklin to direct its new sports journalism program. A few months ago, the University of Georgia announced it was initiating a sports journalism program similar to Penn State University's John Curley Center for Sports Journalism established in 2003. And, this summer West Virginia University is launching its sports communication minor.

With the continued expansion of sports media in the marketplace, and far-reaching television and Web efforts, the number of sports-related academic or university programs will surely grow. As university faculty either begin or expand sports curriculum conversations, the issues of wants, needs and resources are certainly in play. What do students want? What does the sports journalism industry need? And what resources are available in fulfilling those wants and needs?

By no means is it unusual for academics to struggle with meeting the wants and needs of the profession. In a three-year study (2004–06) of journalism educators, and print, broadcast **[End Page 85]** and online journalists, there were distinct differences between academic instruction and the priorities of the profession. The groups generally agreed that reporting, ethics, interviewing and research skills were of primary importance, but there were notable disagreements about the effectiveness to which those skills were being taught. Perhaps not surprisingly, academics repeatedly and significantly scored themselves higher in providing instruction for reporting, ethics, interviewing, research skills and copy editing. Also, while educators and practitioners agreed that "basic journalism instruction" and "hands-on training" were most important, professionals were not satisfied with the educational results of either. One respondent wrote: "Too many college graduates, even J-school grads, can't even write a good sentence, much less a good news story. Get back to the basics!" ([Martin, Newman Davis, Nicholson, Otto, South, VanSlyke, Turk & Wenger, 2006, p. 10](#)).

"Sportuguese" Revisited

[Tannenbaum and Noah \(1959\)](#) introduced the notion of "Sportuguese" a half-century ago. They found a strong correlation with the verb usage of sports language and an understanding of those words among sports readers. For non-sports readers, the verbs used by sports writers failed to communicate the

intended message. They wrote: “Sportugese . . . has developed to the stage where it is an integral part of the sports writer’s kit-bag, his stock-in-trade” (p. 164).

With the advent of sports talk radio, 24-hour sports networks, Internet access and a glut of sports bloggers, chatters and Twitterers, Sportugese has expanded exponentially in the 50 years since Tannenbaum and Noah. But as use of the language has increased, has its quality diminished? Has Sportugese become a replacement for good journalism, and how do educators contend with the shift?

It can reasonably be argued that the uphill battle to emphasize **[End Page 86]** basic journalism skills among sports-minded college students has a decidedly steeper grade than other student journalists. Weaned on ESPN’s *SportsCenter* and the boisterous proclamations and prognostications of profound prattlers such as Dan Patrick and Stuart Scott, sports journalism students have developed a proclivity for the outlandish and opinioned, but not necessarily the journalistically seaworthy. In [The Best American Sports Writing 2004](#), Editor Glenn [Stout \(2004\)](#) observed:

Instead of looking to other writing to model, too many (young sports writers) ape the worst qualities of “sports-talk” in print, presumably with the goal of making the transition from the page. The result is writing that aspires to have the same effect—writing informed not by...