



Breaking News Writing Samples

Jeff Poirier, BottomLine Editor

As a breaking news editor for ESPN from 2015-18, my work was broadcast into millions of homes and demanded the highest level of speed and accuracy.

The daily influx of news, from historic performances to blockbuster transactions and catastrophic injuries, kept me busy. I covered the Olympics, World Series, NBA Finals and every conceivable type of sports story from around the globe. However, the late nights and long weekends I'm most proud of took place outside the lines.

Our newsroom lived at the intersection of sports and society. Athletes are as famous now for their on-field exploits as for their political and cultural viewpoints. The stories that stick out in my mind are those that transcend sports – the fight for social justice, the fallout from scandal, the death of a legend.

Muhammad Ali's 10-Bell Salute

One shift I will never forget is June 3, 2016, the night of Muhammad Ali's death. Ali had been battling Parkinson's disease for decades, but reports of his condition worsened that week. We were ready, with a prepared obituary, overnight staffing and regular meetings on the imminent news.

It was late Friday night when ESPN's Universal News Group gave us the call. Within seconds, we had our copy written, proofread and set to alert. As "Breaking News" flashed across the BottomLine, I became the first person to report Ali's passing on any ESPN platform. But the night was far from over.

For someone of Ali's stature, the reaction to his death is of near equal consequence. Historically, he is a polarizing figure on issues of religion and politics. On this night, the adulation of his memory took no side, pouring in from the sports world and beyond.

After a frenzied few hours, ESPN honored Ali's legacy with a 10-bell salute, airing simultaneously across all networks. Though I played just a small part in its execution, a shiver of significance came over me: this is the power of journalism.

Colin Kaepernick: Kneeling for Justice

One of the biggest stories in sports in 2016 was the ongoing feud between Colin Kaepernick and the NFL over Kaepernick's decision to kneel in protest during the national anthem. The story attracted international attention when then-President Donald Trump got involved, kick-starting the social justice reckoning we have seen in recent years.

We covered the Kaepernick saga from start to finish on the BottomLine, as it morphed into a national debate over freedom of speech and racial injustice.

NFL invites Colin Kaepernick to attend one-on-one meeting with commissioner Roger Goodell, ESPN's Jim Trotter reports.

Kaepernick's attorney tells ABC News that their party requested a mediator be present due to collusion grievance, but the proposal was denied by the league. An NFL spokesman tells Yahoo Sports that Kaepernick's attorney's comments are "disingenuous."

Larry Nassar's Sexual Abuse Stopped by Bravery of Survivors

Perhaps the most important story I reported on during my time with ESPN was the sexual abuse scandal with USA Gymnastics and Michigan State University. Larry Nassar, who was sentenced to 40-175 years in prison in 2018, committed sexual crimes against hundreds of gymnasts under his medical care.

The story rocked the sports world and brought to light the lack of protection for athletes, particularly young women in amateur sports. I covered the Nassar case for more than three years, following it step-by-step from allegation, to investigation and eventually sentencing.

Former Olympic and Michigan State doctor Larry Nassar receives maximum sentence of 60 years in prison on federal child pornography charges. Nassar is also facing sentencing on multiple charges of sexual assault, to which he has already pleaded guilty.

In wake of Nassar's sentencing, Michigan State president Lou Anna Simon resigns. U.S. Olympic Committee CEO Scott Blackmun calls for all current USA Gymnastics directors to resign.
