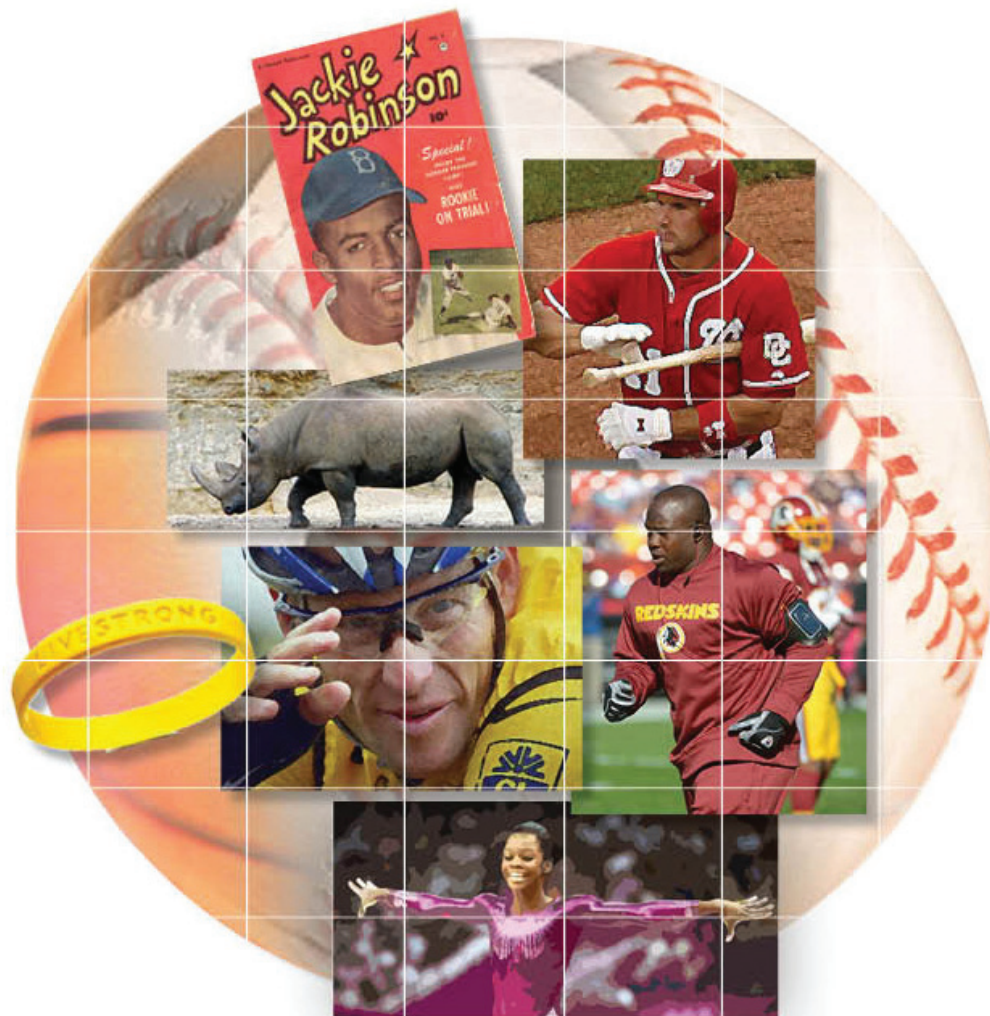
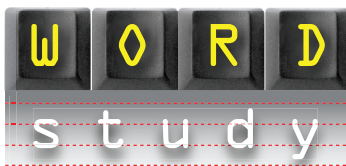


Sports Ethics

- Word Study: Is That Ethical?
- Post Reprint: “Redskins linebacker London Fletcher has grown from boy in peril to NFL elder statesman”
- Student Activity: Role Models — Ethics in Motion
- Student Activity: “Do No Harm in Action”
- Post Reprint: Sally Jenkins's steadfast support of Lance Armstrong
- Think Like a Reporter: The Ethics of Reporting



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Is That Ethical?

Some of your classmates boo a player on the opposing team. A player jabs her elbow into an opponent's ribs. A coach yells obscenities at his team during practice. Are these acceptable actions?

Referees, coaches, school administrators and league rules usually confront poor sportsmanship. What should the rest of the student body do? You should exhibit conduct that shows respect for others — your team and opponents.

WHAT DOES SPORTSMANSHIP HAVE TO DO WITH ETHICS?

Good sportsmanship is right conduct or ethical behavior. The rules of sportsmanship are similar to moral principles that govern a person's or a group's behavior. You learn ethical behavior at home and school, through religious teachings and athletic rules.

WHAT IS THE ROOT OF "ETHICS"?

The Greek philosopher Aristotle wrote many treatises, including about *ta ethika*, character, in the 300s B.C.E. The Greek word *ethos* means "custom" or "moral character." *Ethikos* is the adjective meaning ethical. In the 13th century, the Old French word *étique* derived from the Late Latin *ethica*. These terms' roots spring from the Greek *ethike philosophia*, "moral philosophy."

In France, a code of ethics is un code d' éthique, medical ethics are éthique médicale, and an Ethics Committee is comité éthique. Do you see the original root word in these modern terms?

We are focusing on a code of good behavior, being good sports on the team and in the stands.

HOW DO YOU SHOW GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP?

Good sportsmanship begins before a game begins. From showing respect while the national anthem is played to shaking hands with opponents. What are three examples of ethical conduct that are expected at your school?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

You cannot lose when you behave with respect for others.

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MIKE WISE



Redskins linebacker London Fletcher has grown from boy in peril to NFL elder statesman

London Fletcher caught just a bit of Ray Lewis's big announcement Wednesday in Baltimore. Letting it all out as only Lewis can, the great, proud, yet now clearly aging middle linebacker declared this his last NFL postseason.

Fletcher won't lie; born four days apart from Lewis in May of 1975, he saw the obvious parallel. After 15 years, 240 straight games and more than 1,000 numbing ice baths to heal for another week of giving and receiving pain, it made him think.

"Anytime you see a guy retire, especially a guy like Ray who's been at this game for so long, you wonder when it's going to be your end," he says. "I don't know. I'm just thinking about the Seahawks. You know me: I've been year-to-year for, like, five years."

It's about 48 hours before the Redskins play their first home playoff game since 1999, the same year a 24-year-old undrafted free agent out of a Division III college in Cleveland helped Dick Vermeil's St. Louis Rams to a rousing Super Bowl victory.

Did you know London Fletcher made the Rams' public-relations staff change his listed height of 6 feet to what it really was, barely 5 feet 10, because he wanted undersize kids to know the NFL was possible for them too? Or that his teammates used to call the rookie "Stuart Little"?

Looking back, Kurt Warner and the Greatest Show on Turf was a tremendous story. But London's was always better, richer, the best tale of a walk-on who ever played for Vermeil — more inspiring than even Vince Papale playing for the Eagles, dramatized in *Invincible*.

Because Disney can't go to the places Fletcher has been, what he made it through. Too dark, too layered — too painful.



JONATHAN NEWTON/THE WASHINGTON POST

London Fletcher, Washington Redskin

"Kecia," Fletcher said Friday afternoon before he left the team's locker room in Ashburn, making sure it is spelled correctly. "It's K-E-C-I-A."

When you see a 37-year-old man with gray whiskers protruding from his chin, the same man they call a mentor to 22-year-old Robert Griffin III, the captain of the Redskins' defense, the rock of this roster through good and bad times since 2007, you forget: London Fletcher was once an 11-year-old boy in one of the worst neighborhoods in Cleveland, trying to negotiate a world of drugs and guns the best he could.

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in the family. You still think about what her life could have been. I was just 11 years old, turning 12 later that year.”

London's mother went to the worse place to deal with her despair: the corner, rock cocaine. He knows Kecia's murder triggered the drug addiction, changed his only real support mechanism after his parents divorced into the mother he no longer knew.

Through college and into the NFL, he prayed for her sobriety. When she got clean, it was almost bittersweet; Linda Fletcher died six days before his wedding in 2006. “Heart attack,” his younger sister, Trina, said a few weeks ago in a makeshift tent for players’ families in Cleveland, where Fletcher had played in his home town for the first time in his career.

“My sister and I were boo-hooing during the wedding. It was tough on all of us, but especially London,” Trina said. “He had to plan for a wedding and a funeral.”

He has had cousins and uncles shot and killed much younger than 37. He has seen family members in and out of jail and back again. Fletcher himself once had a loaded gun pointed at his temple after an argument with a neighbor almost cost him his life.

“You hear all the stories and it was like that,” he says. “But that’s the inner city for a lot of kids, not just me. Lot of people I grew up with weren’t as fortunate.”

Even victorious homecomings like last month's in Cleveland can be tainted. Fletcher learned after the Browns game that four of his family members, including several cousins, had been arrested for what Cleveland police said were altercations with fans. Fletcher said overzealous stadium security led to the problem.

“I take every day as a blessing being in this league,” Fletcher says on Friday before he leaves the locker room. “Never took anything for granted. I’ve been blessed with great health, preparation, all the things you need to be successful. Accountability, just really trying to make sure I’m on top of my game at all times. That’s why I’ve been able to last so long.”

Maybe you feel like you've heard this story before,

the one about the African American kid from the inner city who overcomes hell to survive and thrive in pro sports. Sadly, it's still too common. But his beginning was worth repeating.

Because now you know where the anger and the hurt Fletcher plays with came from, how he used things no child should see to become a three-time Pro Bowler, to not miss a game in 15 seasons — how he could leave that violent person on the field and be a committed husband, religious father of three, the man who started London's Bridge Foundation to target kids like himself in Charlotte, Buffalo, Washington and Cleveland.

I have been to the Capitol with Fletcher and some of those kids, who stared to the top of the dome in awe and wonder. I have seen him honor a charity request by dancing to Michael Jackson's *Thriller* with 30 grade-school kids at Washington Episcopal School.

Look, the football player is flat-out amazing. The consistency, the leadership. Four interceptions in the past six games, 139 combined tackles at 37, days away from a December in which he was named NFC Defensive Player of the Month. Given the amount of treatment he has to go through each week just to get on the field and an injury that nearly ended his streak, his season has been incredible. The guy has the pain threshold of a complete *Rocky* DVD set.

But none of the numbers stacks up to London Fletcher, the scarred boy from East Cleveland who somehow ended up triumphing over his environment. When his sister was murdered and his mother was all but lost, that kid gave life a forearm shiver. And he grew up to become not just an ironman of a linebacker but, much more importantly, a man.

Here's hoping Sunday isn't his last game. Either way, his story — the 11-year-old still inside that old head of an NFL veteran — deserves to be remembered as much as he still remembers Kecia. ■

Mike Wise's column was published January 5, 2013. For other columns by Mike Wise, visit washingtonpost.com/wise.

Role Models — Ethics in Motion

They don't sit at home admiring their Super Bowl rings, polishing their trophies and medals, or seeking adulation. They are athletes who give back to their communities, mentor young players and provide the best role models.

READ

Mike Wise, a *Washington Post* sports columnist, introduces readers to the man behind the stats. Read "Redskins linebacker London Fletcher has grown from boy in peril to NFL elder statesman."

1. Summarize London Fletcher's childhood.
2. Readers are not told directly what made Fletcher the "ironman of a lineback" a man.
 - What does Fletcher's words reveal about his motivation?
 - What does the interview with Fletcher's sister add?
 - What do Wise's examples reveal?
3. Give examples of London Fletcher giving back to his community and being a positive role model.

READ ABOUT LOCAL ATHLETES

Washington Post sports writers profile local high school and college athletes who have interesting stories that go behind the scenes of what is seen on the court or playing field.

Choose one of these three articles to read or find one of your own in the Sports section:

- "An immigrant's transition gets a boost with help from the game of baseball," Josh Barr, May 26, 2012
- "'She is so strong' — Cystic fibrosis can't slow Stone Bridge's Tiernan," James Wagner, June 5, 2012
- "Separating the myth from DeMatha," Rick Maese and Brandon Parker, March 27, 2013

What is the main idea that is conveyed about the featured athlete?

- How is this conveyed through the athlete's words and actions?
- The words of others?
- Background information and research of the reporter?
- In what ways does the reporter make use of description?

WRITE

Select a student athlete from your school, local sports club or informal neighborhood sports interaction. Using the techniques used by Mike Wise and other *Post* reporters, write a profile of the student athlete.

Do No Harm in Action

❶ Oaths

The headline of the article is taken from the Hippocratic Oath, named after the ancient Greek physician Hippocrates, which contains the phrase, “I will prescribe regimens for the good of my patients according to my ability and my judgment and never do harm to anyone.” Most doctors and other medical practitioners still take some form of the oath today.

According to the article, in what specific ways are NFL physicians put in a position where they have to choose to violate this oath? Can you find examples of this in other sports? Look for some in the Sports Section or the Health and Science section (Tuesdays) of *The Post*.

Research the Hippocratic Oath. Do students think it still has relevance and should be used? What other professions require the taking of an oath? Try doing an e-Replica search for “oath.”

❷ Sports Journalism

Interview the athletes and coaches at your school. Key questions might include:

- Are student athletes ever pressured to return to playing before they have fully recovered from an injury? Does the school have a policy on this?
- Does the school have an official team physician or physician’s group for their sports teams or are students treated by their own personal family physician? If so, interview them as well.
- What, if any, of the guidelines of the National Federation of State High School Associations (<http://www.nfhs.org/SportsMed.aspx>), do the coaches at your school follow? If not, what guidelines are established and by whom?
- What preventative measures do your school’s coaches take to minimize the risk of player injury?
- What role do student trainers play in maintaining the well being of athletes?

You might also consider writing a feature story on an injured student athlete, chronicling his or her

story through the season from injury to treatment and rehabilitation to the student’s return to playing. Interview the student, team members, coaches, doctors, school administrators and parents.

❸ Follow The Post ...

Player injury is by no means unique to football, but it may get more attention because of the physical contact required in the game and the relatively short season. In the article “Do No Harm,” Matt Matava, team physician for the St. Louis Rams and the president-elect of the NFL Physicians Society, says, “Football players liken a collision on the field to a car wreck. But there’s no situation I know of where you have a car wreck happen and you have so many medical experts there waiting for it to occur.” In this way then, the job of a team physician in any sport is unique.

Watch for stories of injured players in an upcoming season. Research the nature of their injury, the prescribed treatment, and their journey through recovery and return to play. Do any of the same issues raised in “Do No Harm” come up? Write about similarities and differences in sports medicine between the two sports, differences of opinion on what should be done to treat the injury and when to return to play, or another topic that would be of interest to students at your school.

❹ Health and Science Angle

Surgery on a torn meniscus is one of the procedures highlighted in “Do No Harm.” Look through the *Post*’s Health and Science Section which runs every Tuesday for articles about surgical procedures to treat different injuries or illnesses. In particular, look for articles that talk about procedures where, as with meniscus surgery, different treatments or surgeries might be chosen by doctors and patients.

What kinds of factors have to be taken into account? For example, some procedures might carry unique risks based on a patient’s profession, age, family history or other health conditions. Do some procedures carry

photos, the layout uses two facing pages with content that spreads out over both pages.

In this way, as in “Do No Harm,” the feature can tell the story from a variety of angles, textually and visually, incorporating informational graphics like that highlighting meniscus surgery, as well as charts and graphs telling the “numbers” or quantitative side of the story. Notice especially, how the story of Robert Griffin III’s knee injury is told in photographic frames, and how the photo montage on the front page is used to tell the story of how often NFL physicians are forced to make hard decisions which pit their “do no harm” oath against the pressures of doing what is necessary to get the player back on the field as soon as possible.

Is the staff of your school newspaper considering doing a feature on a specific topic? If so, consider using the layout of “Do No Harm” as a model. This layout is a good example of what is sometimes referred to in layout terminology as a “Double Truck” layout. Instead of using a single page with just text and maybe



OMBUDSMAN

Sally Jenkins's steadfast support of Lance Armstrong

BY PATRICK B. PEXTON

I understand that *Post* readers are angry at sports columnist Sally Jenkins's long-standing defense of cyclist Lance Armstrong. I get that.

If you read the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency's investigative report on Armstrong, it is persuasive. Armstrong looks like a cheat, a liar and a ringleader for doping. He elected not to dispute the August report, and as a result he was stripped of his record-breaking seven Tour de France titles.

But as to whether Jenkins violated *Post* ethics rules or some unstated journalistic principles, I'm less convinced.

Let's look at Jenkins's career at *The Post*. She has been primarily a sports columnist, writing the occasional feature story on everything from the events of Sept. 11, 2001, to Joe Paterno and the sexual abuse scandal at Penn State.

Jenkins returned here in 2000, following an earlier stint on the Sports staff, from 1984 to 1990, and a decade of freelance writing, which included a best-selling 1999 book co-authored with Armstrong about his battle with cancer and his first Tour de France victory. Before that, she had never covered cycling or Armstrong as a *Post* reporter; nor has she since she returned.

Freelancers or the Associated Press cover the annual Tours for *The Post*, and stories specifically about doping and Lance Armstrong have been written by sports reporters Liz Clarke and Amy Shipley.

Jenkins has, however, written occasional columns about cycling and Armstrong. In the past 12 years, she has written 13 such columns, most of them in July every year, when the Tour de France takes place.

In every one, she either explained in the text or

added in a note at the end that she wrote books with Armstrong, that she profited from them, that they are close friends and that, when it comes to Armstrong, she isn't objective. As she wrote in a July 2003 column, "So you can't say anything bad about him to me, I won't hear it."

Journalists should always disclose a possible conflict to their readers. Jenkins did every time.

Except for two columns this year about the Anti-Doping Agency's report, her other 11 columns about cycling or Armstrong were about not drugs but the unique challenges of the grueling, three-week Tour de France, in which cyclists power 3,000 miles through difficult conditions, overcoming pain, unyielding fatigue and disappointment. Jenkins said that *Post* editors encouraged her to write every one because her potential insight into Armstrong and cycling outweighed any possible conflict.

In other columns about doping, separate from Armstrong, whether about drugs in baseball or in the Olympics, she has been consistent. She thinks that doping investigations are unfairly prosecutorial, that performance-enhancing drugs aren't as cut and dried an issue as is typically portrayed, and that the punishments are less about the athletes and more about politics.

Now, some readers say that she shouldn't write about Armstrong or cycling at all, even in her columns, because it promotes her two Armstrong books (they combined on a second one in 2003). I disagree.

When Rajiv Chandrasekaran, who has covered the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan for *The Post* and written books about them, writes a front-page article about those countries today, does that promote his books? Perhaps indirectly, but he also has a depth of knowledge about those subjects that other reporters don't, just as Jenkins has about cycling. And that makes for better, more insightful stories that serve readers.

Can you say that Jenkins was naive about Armstrong, loyal to a fault and part of the sometimes-worshipful industry that grew around his success? Perhaps. But here is her response to my question:

“I don’t think I’m naive about doping, quite the opposite. I simply don’t feel about it the way some people want me to, and I think that’s the source of their rage. I don’t see doping as a black and white issue; I see it as an extremely complicated moral, judicial, and philosophical one. And I arrived at those conclusions quite independent of Lance.

“I don’t condone what Lance did — I simply forgive it.”

Armstrong was not a “source” in the traditional sense of reporter and source. He was a sports star who hired Jenkins to do his memoir. They were collaborators and became friends. She explained that repeatedly to readers when she wrote about him in her columns on cycling and on sports writ large.

I may disagree with Jenkins on the damage Armstrong has done, but she has violated none of *The Post*’s ethics guidelines.

— December 21, 2012

Patrick Pexton was Washington Post ombudsman from March 2011-March 2013.



Sally Jenkins

Washington Post sports columnist Sally Jenkins was awarded the 2002 Associated Press’ Sports Columnist of the Year. She has also worked at *Sports Illustrated* and been a correspondent for CNBC and NPR’s *All Things Considered*.

In addition to co-writing *It’s Not About the Bike* and *Every Second Counts* with Lance Armstrong, Jenkins other books include *Sum It Up* [<http://www.npr.org/books/authors/138296047/sally-jenkins>], *Men Will Be Boys* and *The Real All Americans*. She was part of the *Post*’s team nominated for the Pulitzer Prize for their coverage of the death of Univ. of Maryland basketball player Len Bias.

She is the daughter of distinguished sportswriter Dan Jenkins. In 2012 he was initiated into the World Golf Hall of Fame. Dan (1996) and Sally (2005) are the only father and daughter to be in the National Sportscasters and Sportswriters Association (NSSA) Hall of Fame.

Hear More

A conversation with Dan Jenkins

Sally Jenkins interviews her father, noted golf sportswriter. http://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/a-conversation-with-dan-and-sally-jenkins/2011/06/15/AGe4PPWH_video.html



NSSA

Sportswriters Sally Jenkins and her father Dan Jenkins

http://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/a-conversation-with-dan-and-sally-jenkins/2011/06/15/AGe4PPWH_video.html

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The Ethics of Reporting

The Washington Post, as most media organizations, has ethics guidelines. Broadcasters maintain standards and practices departments. These individuals and guidelines exist to insure the credibility and objectivity of reporting and integrity of reporters.

The Washington Post Standards and Ethics require reporters and editors to “approach every assignment with the fairness of open minds and without prior judgment.” These conduct guidelines pledge to “avoid conflict of interest or the appearance of conflict of interest, wherever and whenever possible.” In the area of finances, reporters and editors “freelance for no one and accept no speaking engagements without permission from department heads.”

Read the December 21, 2012, ombudsman’s column. Patrick B. Pexton in “Sally Jenkins’s steadfast support of Lance Armstrong” addresses readers’ concerns that sports columnist Sally Jenkins was too close to cyclist Lance Armstrong and unethical in her support of him. The basic questions to be answered:

- Has Sally Jenkins violated Post ethics rules?
- Has Sally Jenkins disclosed any possible conflicts of interest with her readers?
- Should readers expect columnists to hold points of view? Even if they are not popular points of view?

After reading the column, answer the following questions.

1. When Sally Jenkins co-authored a book with Lance Armstrong, did she need to follow *The Post*’s ethics standards? Why or why not?
2. In what ways has Jenkins been transparent with her readers?
3. “We make every reasonable effort to be free of obligation to news sources and to special interests.” In what ways have Jenkins and her editors followed this ethics guideline?
4. What are the distinctions between a news story, a feature and a column?
5. What views does Sally Jenkins hold on doping?
6. Post reporters — such as Rajiv Chandrasekaran, Bob Woodward, John Pomfret, Anthony Shadid and David Broder — have written books about the areas they covered for The Post. What are the arguments for and against this practice?
7. What do you conclude: Has Sally Jenkins violated Post ethics rules?
8. What do you conclude: Has Sally Jenkins disclosed any possible conflicts of interest with her readers?
9. What do you conclude: Should readers expect columnists to hold points of view?
10. What guidelines should your school publications have regarding the reporting of sports? For example, should players who are on the newspaper, yearbook, broadcast and web staffs report on the sports they play?