

Sports Illustrated Introductions

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Introductions have two main jobs: identify a claim or establish exigence and grab the reader's attention. Though academic writing is not in the same league as sports writing, there is something to be said about the verve, finesse, and intrigue that sports journalism can have—a little zip, zing, and freshness never hurt anyone. As Ezra Pound once said, "Make it new." And as Tim Gunn says on *Project Runway*, "Make it work." Take a look at the following introductions from recent *Sports Illustrated* issues:

HARLEM, N.Y. -- It's Friday night at Rucker Park, and a slim, lefty point guard -- one of the youngest players in the game -- is effortlessly navigating the open asphalt. Lobbing alleys. Dropping dimes. Coasting for layups. And the emcee, Bobbito Garcia -- perhaps you know him as the voice of the NBA Street 2 & 3 video game -- is letting everyone know about it.

—Luke Winn, "Doing The 'Dooby-Doo' At Rucker"

NORTON, Mass. -- What the student wants to know, of course, is how does he do it. Vijay Singh's a good golfer. Pretty much anything Tiger Woods can do with a golf ball, Vijay Singh can, too. The two men were paired together in the last group on Labor Day at the TPC Boston, in the fourth round of the Deutsche Bank Championship. Singh had a three-shot lead through three rounds, built by shooting 61 in the third round.

—Michael Bamberger, "School's in Session"

After surveying and detailing the busts, bombs, breakdowns and blowouts in baseball last week, it's only right that I put on my happy face -- at least for today and tomorrow -- to break open the breakthroughs and biggest surprise success stories of 2006.

—Jon Heyman, "American Beauties"

We don't need the pregame news conferences in front of the national media. We don't need the specially numbered baseballs with the watermark that can be seen only under an ultraviolet light. We don't need the Major League Baseball security people deployed around the outfield seats. We don't need the commissioner of baseball telling us what is a record and what is not. We don't need the backstories, the tinkling piano music, the hollow declarations (which never did carry real meaning) of how the most enduring American game is being "saved." This time we will decide for ourselves.

—Tom Verducci, "The Chase for 62"

I'm jonesing for my fix. Come on, admit it -- you are, too. You miss those long lunches down at the soccer pub and those late nights with the TiVo remote and three games on the DVR. You're jonesing because it was addictive and the fix was as plentiful as air.

—Greg Lalas, "Prolonging the Magic"

SAITAMA, Japan -- This one was a surprise. The novelty of the U.S. losing in international competition may be long gone after what happened in Indianapolis and Athens, but this time, the U.S. was expected to at least make it to the final. Greece? No one was too worried about Greece.

—Chris Ballard, "Picked and Rolled"

One day, God willing, Russell Baer was going to tell his son this story. One day, after the boy's heart and brain had healed, he was going to point to that picture on the kid's bedroom shelf of the man doing a handstand on the roof of a house, take a deep breath and say, *Mav, that's a man who lived a life as pure and died a death as muddy as any man ever to walk this rock, and I was there for both. That's the man, when your heart stopped for an hour and they slit you open neck to navel, who I prayed to because ... well, because you wouldn't exist if he hadn't died, and I wouldn't be half of who I am if he hadn't taught me how to live. That's Pat Tillman, the man you take your middle name from, and I've been waiting for you to ask since the day you were born.*

—Gary Smith, "Remember His Name"

My favorite tradition in all of sports is the playoff beard, which turns every hockey player this time of year into a slap-shootin' Rasputin.

—Steve Rushin, "Hair-Raising Superstition"